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THIRD EDITION

NYC Free & dirt cheap

by Ethan Wolff

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Published by:

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

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ISBN 978-0-470-28972-3

Editor: Stephen Bassman
Production Editor: Suzanna R. Thompson
Cartographer: Roberta Stockwell
Production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services
Interior design by Melissa Auciello-Brogan
Photos on p. 4, p. 16, p. 146, p. 190, p. 232, p. 288, and p. 324 by John Vorwald
Photos on p. xii and p. 106 by Ethan Wolff

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Manufactured in the United States of America

5 4 3 2 1

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About the Author

Ethan Wolff is a fourth-generation New Yorker. How he happened to grow up in Virginia grows increasingly enigmatic to him. He lives in the heart of the Bargain District on the Lower East Side.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to John Vorwald, who came up with the idea for this book and shepherded it through development; to Stephen Bassman for his stellar editing; and to Evelyn Grollman and Anna Sandler for pitching in. Thanks also to Elroy Wolff, and to anyone who has had to put up with my cheapness over the years. It was all just research.

—Ethan Wolff

An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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Wiley Publishing, Inc. ● 111 River St. ● Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Other Great Guides for Your Trip:

Frommer's New York City

Frommer's Portable New York City

Frommer's Memorable Walks in New York City

Pauline Frommer's New York City

The Unofficial Guide to New York City

Free & Dirt Cheap Icons & Abbreviations

We also use four feature icons that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate urban adventurers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

FREE Events, attractions, or experiences that cost no more than your time and a swipe of your Metrocard.

FINE PRINT The unspoken conditions or necessary preparations to experience certain free and dirt cheap events.

★ The best free and dirt cheap events, dining, shopping, living, and exploring in the city.

Special events worth marking in your calendar.

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Now that you have this guidebook to help you plan a great trip, visit our website at **www.frommers.com** for additional travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly to give you instant access to the most current trip-planning information available. At Frommers.com, you'll find scoops on the best airfares, lodging rates, and car rental bargains. You can even book your travel online through our reliable travel booking partners. Other popular features include:

- Online updates of our most popular guidebooks
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- Newsletters highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Podcasts, interactive maps, and up-to-the-minute events listings
- Opinionated blog entries by Arthur Frommer himself
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

Priceless views of the Manhattan skyline and New York Harbor are yours for the taking, courtesy of the Governors Island ferry. *See p. 255 for more information.*

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

It's no secret that NYC costs are out of control. Even so, the last year has witnessed enough pricing chutzpah to make a Park Avenue plutocrat wince. Looking for a wine locker beneath Bar Boulud? It'll set you back only $15,000 a year. Up for tea at the Plaza? It's $60. NYC will also sell you a $51 cocktail (a tequila at Johnny Utah's), an $88 plate of fried rice (thanks, davidburke & donatella), and a $175 hamburger (courtesy of the Wall Street Burger Shoppe). There are $1,000 pizzas (topped with lobster and six kinds of caviar at Nino's Bellissima) and $1,000 omelets (more lobster and caviar, from Norma's at the Parker Meridian) and $1,000 sundaes (even more caviar, on top of Tahitian ice cream, Amedei Porcelana chocolate, and edible gold at Serendipity 3).

The publicity-stunt extremes aside, prices are up all across the city. The subway went to $2 and, following the established economic model, pizza followed. Now it's getting hard to find a slice for less than $2.50. The bagel jumped 65%, on top of the extra 26% we were already paying for our semi-monthly cab rides. Wheat is up 130%, rice 74%, eggs 62%. The national housing market may be in the tank, but you'd never know it in Manhattan. Apartment prices have hit yet another all-time high. One-point-six million is the latest figure. And that's the *average*. So, in a town with $175 hamburgers and $1,000 plates of eggs, where an apartment that would make a convict feel claustrophobic costs well over a million and a half, a book on living on the cheap must be a pretty slim volume, right?

Wrong.

New York takes a lot of pride in being the cultural capital of the world, and to maintain that reputation we let a lot of the goods go for free. Art, music, dance, and drama can all be found for simply the price of showing up, and there's plenty of it to go around. When I visit another city and see that they're putting on a production of alfresco Shakespeare I think, "How sweet." Last year, NYC had *10* of them. Another 10 places hosted free outdoor films. Some 40 cultural institutions are always free, and most of our top-tier museums set aside several hours a week where you pay what you wish to enter. The best work of the world's emerging artists hangs in our galleries, which never charge for entry. New York's libraries circulate thousands of books, videos, and albums, in addition to offering us free films, classes, and lectures.

When it comes time to eat, New Yorkers are blessed with incredible ethnic food, which also doubles as some of the city's cheapest. Chinatown serves up savory dumplings for a buck, Peking duck sandwiches for $2.25, and four-course buffets for $3.50. My favorite New York tacos are only $2 a pop, and for $3.75 you can dig into humanity's greatest achievement, the bánh mì sandwich.

Between these pages, I'll also show you how to catch a free cruise through New York Harbor to the city's most scenic picnic grounds. For your staycation pleasure, there are five dirt-cheap walking tours, covering downtown to Midtown to the Atlantic Ocean. I'll give you some great cheap date ideas, like "First Saturdays" in Brooklyn, the Rubin Museum of Art's "Cabaret Cinema," and a whole passel of restaurants that will have you looking good without draining your wallet.

In the post-9/11 era, we all appreciate the city in new ways, but it's easy enough to forget that New York is not an inevitability; it's a rare phenomenon. Taking advantage of all the amazing resources here is practically a civic duty. When you join up with a big New York giveaway, you'll find a special bonus: free camaraderie. There's nothing better than sharing the knowledge that you're in on something amazing, like a band playing its heart out in front of sunset on the Hudson, or the group spirit of a Bryant Park film, or the feeling when you wend your way out of Central Park with fellow theatergoers after a world-class Joseph Papp production. Our legendary festivals and parades kindle that same energy. Even little everyday moments can be inspiring. How many years has it been since Hollywood made a movie half as entertaining as a couple of hours sitting on the steps of the New York Public Library, or Federal Hall, or the Met?

These experiences are literally priceless—gifts bestowed by the city that can make parsimony feel like one of humanity's crowning virtues. Whether you've checked this book out of the library or picked it up from the bargain bin, you should revel in your cheapness. What feels better than beating the system?

Just because you don't have the cash flow for $51 drinks doesn't mean New York has to feel like someone else's party. When you walk across the Brooklyn Bridge on a sunny afternoon, or park yourself by the waters of the Temple of Dendur, or cruise by the Statue of Liberty, you own them as much as anyone else does. The city's great charm is that it's available to anybody, at any time.

Every day in New York is an adventure. For better and for worse. Make the most of it, even if you're not sitting on a hoard of gold.

Not NYC's most famous freebie, but with a jaw-dropping view and great flicks, the Brooklyn Bridge Movies With a View film series is one of the city's treasures. *See p. 56.*

1 BEST OF THE FREE & DIRT CHEAP APPLE

A lot of great bargains in this world don't withstand close scrutiny. Anyone who's ever "won" a free weekend at a North Carolina timeshare can attest to that. New Yorkers are lucky, however, in having a menu of freebies and cheapies that aren't just discards or traps. From Shakespeare in the Park to car-less drive-in movies to kayaking along the Hudson, there's a host of remarkable activities here that can't be had in other cities for any price. In the dirt cheap realm, the Big Apple's big volume creates bargain opportunities left and right. From cheap ethnic food to giveaway avant-garde theater, an urban adventurer can go far on very little. What follows is the best of the best.

1 Best Entertainment Bets

- **Best Manhattan Parade:** New Yorkers are pros at assembling en masse. My favorite pageant is one of the city's most inclusive, the **Greenwich Village Halloween Parade,** at which elaborate costumes and a healthy dose of gallows humor make the festive spirit infectious. See p. 26.

- **Best Outer-Borough Parade:** As New York events become more and more commercialized, it's nice to have one occasion that's defiantly do-it-yourself. Coney Island's **Mermaid Parade** brings low-budget finery to the Atlantic shore. Classic cars serve as the chariots for a procession of mermaids and Neptunes who will never stand accused of being overdressed. See p. 23.

- **Best Festival: Harlem Week** began as a single day 30 years ago and now stretches across the entire month of August. Film, jazz, and food festivals are among the highlights to be found along lovely brownstone blocks Uptown. See p. 24.

- **Best DIY Rock Show:** Why trek out to the Nassau Coliseum to watch some aging monsters of rock, when the Lower East Side offers up the same three chords for free? **Arlene's Grocery** (95 Stanton St.; ✆ **212/358-1633**) is the tri-state's best place to play rock star, with a real-live rock band standing in for soulless laser discs. See p. 77.

- **Best Cultural Center with Beer: Pete's Candy Store** (709 Lorimer St.; ✆ **718/302-3770**) does its part to keep Williamsburg elevated and enlightened, bringing in a bushel of live music and readings. Quiz, spelling, and Scrabble nights round out a full schedule of free diversions. See p. 83.

- **Best New-York-Studio-Sized Music Venue:** The stage is tiny and the seats are few, but the back room of the **Lakeside Lounge** (162 Ave. B; ✆ **212/529-8463**) brings in improbably big acts. Rock and rock tributaries can be found on most nights, and there's never a cover. See p. 31.

- **Best Jazzy Venue:** Low-pretense Brooklyn meets Euro sophistication over pints of Hoegaarden at Williamsburg's **Zebulon** (258 Wythe Ave.; ✆ **718/218-6934**). Afrobeat, funk, and improv jazz can be heard here for no cover. See p. 34.

- **Best Concerts for Skipping Out on the Office:** The worker bees of the Financial District have

long taken advantage of the great classical performances heard during the **"Concerts at One"** series at **Trinity Church** (74 Trinity Place; ✆ **212/602-0747**) and **St. Paul's Chapel** (Broadway and Fulton St.). St. Paul's hosts lunchtime Mondays, and Trinity handles Thursdays. The acoustics are great in both churches, and the $2 suggested donation doesn't begin to reflect the caliber of talent. See p. 38.

- **Best Summer Music Festival:** Every year **SummerStage** (Central Park; ✆ **212/360-2777**) seems to get better organized, efficiently channeling music fans into a stage area just off the Rumsey Playfield in the middle of Central Park. Though several shows a year are benefit performances with steep ticket prices, the calendar is still littered with huge names playing for free. See p. 48.

- **Best Summer Music Festival That's Not SummerStage:** The massive **Lincoln Center Out of Doors** (70 Lincoln Center Plaza; ✆ **212/546-2656**) festival presents hundreds of acts every August. The range is staggering, covering jazz and dance and opera and everything in between. See p. 45.

- **Best Movie Screenings *with* a Roof:** David Maysles's new Harlem institution, the **Maysles Cinema** (343 Malcolm X Blvd.; ✆ **212/582-6050**), shows provoking films and documentaries several nights a week, usually for only $7 a pop. See p. 51.

- **Best Movie Screenings *Without* a Roof:** Forty-Second Street welcomes movie fans with an eclectic selection of classics during the **HBO Bryant Park Summer Film Festival** (✆ **212/512-5700**). The lawn crowds up quickly, but that only enhances the festive atmosphere. See p. 54.

- **Best Movie Screenings *on* a Roof:** Come summer nights, God dims the overheads, and indie films play on rooftops (and a schoolyard) across Brooklyn. **Rooftop Films** (✆ **718/417-7362**) is quickly becoming a local institution, with quirky, well-selected fare. See p. 51.

- **Best Movie Date Night:** Friday nights the **Rubin Museum of Art** (150 W. 17th St.; ✆ **212/620-5000**) throws open its doors. You can tour intriguing Himalayan art for free, and for $7 you can treat yourself to a martini and a movie. The **Cabaret Cinema** series brings an eclectic selection of films, along with the occasional related celebrity, for just the

price of a tipple or a snack at the bar. See p. 50.

- **Best Outdoor Summer Theater:** Forsooth, New York's greatest summer asset is no secret. **Shakespeare in the Park** (✆ **212/539-8750**) hooks up tens of thousands of bard hounds with the best in Elizabethan drama (using some of today's best actors and directors). The Delacorte Theater's site in the middle of Central Park is well nigh enchanted. See p. 63.

- **Best Outdoor Summer Theater That Isn't Shakespeare in the Park:** Energetic performances substitute for big names and big budgets in downtown's alternative **Shakespeare in the Park(ing) Lot** (✆ **212/877-0099**). The setting couldn't be less formal, but somehow the troupe manages to cast its spell. See p. 63.

- **Best Free Dance:** Modern and experimental dance has a home during **Movement Research at the Judson Church** (55 Washington Sq. S.; ✆ **212/539-2611**). Dancers and choreographers vary from week to week, but the talent level stays consistently high. The series only seems to be getting better, especially now that the Judson Church has installed its lovely new dance floor. See p. 76.

- **Best Comedy Troupe:** The founders of the **Upright Citizens Brigade** (307 W. 26th St.; ✆ **212/366-9176**) have gone on to movie and television fortune and fame, but the institution's classes continue to crank out rapier wits. Improv nights here are cheap when they're not free, and the legendary ASSSSCAT 3000 is not to be missed. See p. 82.

- **Best Readings:** The great writerly look of **KGB Bar** (85 E. 4th St.; ✆ **212/505-3360**) is well matched by the great writers who come through almost every night of the week. Enough quality words have been spilled beneath the Soviet-kitsch furnishings to justify the publishing of KGB anthologies, in addition to a journal. See p. 94.

- **Best Readings in a Bookstore:** New York has many great literary events at its mom and pop shops, but the little players don't have quite the juice to bring in huge names every time. The **Union Square branch of Barnes & Noble** (33 E. 17th St.; ✆ **212/253-0810**) has no difficulty booking the literati glitterati—check out their calendar for a steady stream of famous scribes. See p. 89.

2 Best Cheap Eats

- **Best Investment of $1 (Bagel):** New York exported the bagel to the four corners of America, but after the indignities that have been performed (piña colada bagels?) we should ask for them back. Fortunately, New York still has the best, and a single bill will let you sample one at **Kossar's Bialys** (367 Grand St.; ✆ **212/473-4810**). With flavor and texture honed to perfection, you can't make a better carb investment. See p. 130.

- **Best Investment of $1.25 (Hot Dog):** For cheap protein and quick bursts of patriotic fervor, New York's dogs can't be beat. **Gray's Papaya** (2090 Broadway; ✆ **212/799-0243;** plus other locations) is the best of the fruit drink–and–wiener purveyors, with flavorful, lightly charred links that'll only set you back a buck and a quarter. See p. 123.

- **Best Investment of $2 (Tacos):** Served in a double layer of supple corn tortillas and garnished with fresh tomatillo sauce, the tacos at **Zaragoza** (215 Ave. A; ✆ **212/780-9204**) burst with flavor. At just $2 for standouts like enchilada and roast pork, they're the cheapest way to pay a visit south of the border without leaving NYC. See p. 124.

- **Best Investment of $2.25 (Sesame Pancake):** The dumplings at **Vanessa's Dumpling House** (118 Eldridge St.; ✆ **212/625-8008**) are justly famous and a total steal at four for $1. Less publicized but equally delicious are the sandwiches—a big wedge of sesame pancake with fresh cilantro, carrot, and tender Peking duck. See p. 109.

- **Best Investment of $2.50 (New York Slice):** First-time visitors to **Sal's & Carmine's Pizza** (2671 Broadway; ✆ **212/663-7651**), spurred to spontaneous compliments by the spectacular pies, can expect to hear back from the eponymous proprietors, "Well, where the hell you been this whole time?" One taste of the crispy crust and characterfull sauce and you'll be asking yourself the same question. See p. 131.

- **Best Investment of $3.50 (Buffet):** The competition between two Chinatown buffet restaurants has driven prices into the ground. An almost comical price of $3.50 covers four fresh, tasty Chinese entrees over rice at my favorite, **Yi Mei Gourmet Food** (51 Division St.; ✆ **212/925-1921**). See p. 110.

- **Best Investment of $3.75 (Sandwich):** For me, a bánh mì sandwich is more than just an ingenious blending of French and Vietnamese flavors—a French baguette filled with pork pâté, pickled carrots, daikon, onion, and cilantro—it's one of the apexes of human civilization. You'll find my favorite at the back counter of **Bánh Mì Saigon Bakery** (138-01 Mott St.; ✆ **212/941-1541**). See p. 117.
- **Best Dirt Cheap Sit-Down Meal with Atmosphere:** Cheap Asian too often means over-lit, dingy cafeteria settings. Not so at **Galanga** (149 W. 4th St.; ✆ **212/228-4267**), where a stylish, modern interior makes for a perfect date spot. With such great atmosphere, the spicy, fresh Thai food seems almost a lagniappe. See p. 126.
- **Best Burger:** New Yorkers have voted with their palates by keeping the **Corner Bistro** (331 W. 4th St.; ✆ **212/242-9502**) busy at every hour. With the succulent, unpretentious $5.75 burgers here, it's no wonder. The city's expense-account $15 rivals at the fancy-shmancy places don't even come close. See p. 125.

3 Best Living Bets

- **Best Free School:** With college tuitions spiking endlessly upward, **Cooper Union** (Cooper Sq.; ✆ **212/353-4120**) is a definite anomaly: The 1,000 students here get their education for exactly $0 and 0¢. The rest of us are invited in for exhibitions, readings, and a great series of lectures. See p. 149.
- **Best Free Smarts:** The **Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY)** (365 Fifth Ave.; ✆ **212/817-8215**) keeps adults educated with a terrific selection of lectures, seminars, and panel discussions. Fees are reasonable, and big chunks of the program are on the house. See p. 150.
- **Best Cheap Bed:** Who needs a mint on his pillow and a bill for $250, when **Big Apple Hostel** (119 W. 45th St.; ✆ **212/302-2603**) can provide a good night's sleep for under $40? You'll get a high-rent location, too: right in the heart of the Theater District. See p. 165.
- **Best Gyms:** Stay thin without a fat wallet. For less than 14¢ a day, 29 gyms and rec centers can belong to you. The facilities of the **Department of Parks and**

Recreation (✆ **212/360-8222**) include tracks, weight rooms, dance studios, and boxing rings. For $75 a year ($25 more), you get access to the swimming pools, too. See p. 175.

- **Best Grooming:** Style-conscious New Yorkers flock to Bumble and bumble salon for the latest looks. Savvier souls sign up for the model calls at their school, **Bumble and bumble.University** (415 W. 13th St.; ✆ **866/7-BUMBLE** [728-6253]). If you're selected for the stylist training program, you'll get a free cut, a head full of styling products, and an invitation to call back in a few months to do it all over again. See p. 168.
- **Best Boat Ride:** Transform yourself into river traffic through the programs at the **Downtown Boathouse** (Pier 40, Pier 96, and at 72nd St.; ✆ **646/613-0375**). They'll loan you a kayak and let you paddle around their west side piers. If you get your strength up, you'll be eligible for a longer ride into New York Harbor. See p. 179.

4 Best Shopping Bets

- **Best Thrift Shopping: Housing Works Thrift Shop** (143 W. 17th St.; ✆ **212/366-0820,** plus other locations) brings the prices of fashionable clothes and furniture down to levels real people can afford. The inventory is lightly used and quick to turn over, and the money you spend goes to support a great cause (housing, services, and advocacy for people living with HIV and AIDS). See p. 196.
- **Best Department Store: Century 21** (22 Cortlandt St.; ✆ **212/227-9092**) is the Shakespeare in the Park of shopping—everybody knows about it, it's in great demand, and despite New Yorkers' high expectations it rarely comes up short. Amazing selection and equally amazing prices draw in the crowds 7 days a week. See p. 206.
- **Best Gourmet Food Shop for Tightwads:** Tracking down fancy fromage is not a difficult task in NYC, but to actually purchase a wedge without emptying your purse is another issue. Thank the cheese gods then for the **East Village Cheese Store** (40 Third Ave.; ✆ **212/477-2601**), which has a gigantic selection at $2.99 per pound. This is the ideal place for cocktail party hosts and hostesses to fortify themselves. See p. 212.

New York's Top Five Best-Kept Free Secrets

1. As far as New York vistas go, it's hard to beat the Brooklyn Bridge at night with the Manhattan skyline twinkling in the background. The Brooklyn Bridge **Movies With a View film series** (✆ **718/802-0603**) does its best to enhance the skyline by projecting film favorites against the epic scenery. Compared to its Manhattan competitors, this event is much more under control, with a hip, friendly, and quiet crowd. See p. 56.
2. Though the **National Museum of the American Indian** (1 Bowling Green; ✆ **212/514-3700**) has seen the bulk of its collection moved to the Mall in D.C., the three gallery spaces here still put on great exhibits of contemporary and historic Native American art. The building itself, a magnificent Beaux Arts customs house, is worthy of a visit of its own. See p. 240.
3. The former military base that is **Governors Island** (✆ **212/440-2202**) opens up to the public in summer months, with picturesque free ferry rides through New York Harbor leading to the city's best picnic grounds. Programming has been quickly metastasizing—an arts fest and folk and world music concerts have been added to the existing roster of historical tours. See p. 255.
4. The **New York Earth Room** (141 Wooster St.; ✆ **212/989-5566**) is just that: 140 tons of soil hidden away in a SoHo loft. Even after multiple visits it's a completely unexpected sight, and a few whiffs of the earthy scent can be oddly rejuvenating. See p. 263.
5. Malcolm Forbes's affection for his idiosyncratic collections is obvious from the well-crafted displays at the **Forbes Magazine Galleries** (62 Fifth Ave.; ✆ **212/206-5548**). As you wind through model boats, toy soldiers, Monopoly boards, and trophies, you just may find Forbes's enthusiasm rubbing off on you. See p. 237.

5 Best Exploring Bets

- **Best Exhibits:** The main branch of the public library, formally known as the **Humanities and Social Sciences Library** (Fifth Ave. and 42nd St.; ✆ **212/869-8089**), puts on terrific shows in the hushed interiors behind the lions. Rare editions and manuscripts are often on display, accompanied by thoughtful captions that make equally illuminating reading. See p. 258.
- **Best Tour:** The mayor and the city council still have their offices in graceful old **City Hall** (Broadway, at Murray St.; ✆ **212/788-2170**). This underpublicized free tour allows you to catch glimpses of NYC politico celebs, while admiring gorgeous portraiture and architecture. See p. 271.
- **Best Use of a Former Factory Space in Queens:** The perfunctory design of MoMA QNS couldn't touch Long Island City's **SculptureCenter** (44-19 Purves St.; ✆ **718/361-1750**). Maya Lin left a lot of rough edges, but the overall effect is reminiscent of a cathedral, complete with a catacomb-like basement. The intriguing sculptures and installation art shown here further justify the trip to Queens. See p. 243.
- **Best New Giveaway:** Okay, so the new building that houses the **New Museum** (235 Bowery; ✆ **212/219-1222**) screams maximum security prison, but the free Thursday nights are a great time. Contemporary artwork that skews low-fi, playful, and international fills the upstairs galleries, and the LES comes out to mingle. See p. 250.
- **Best Art Museum:** The **P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center** (22–25 Jackson Ave.; ✆ **718/784-2084**) puts on great art shows just a stop away from Manhattan in Long Island City. The museum is a beautiful conversion of a Renaissance Revival public school, and the interior spaces have been inventively redone to complement the cutting-edge art displayed here. Entrance is by suggested donation. See p. 256.
- **Best Dirt Cheap Date Night: First Saturdays** at the **Brooklyn Museum of Art** (200 Eastern Pkwy.; ✆ **718/638-5000**) are among the best parties of the year. You can generate conversation fodder at exhibits, films, and lectures. You'll also find live music, should all that talk lead to a little dancing. See p. 247.

- **Best Natural Oasis:** Visions of rhododendron valleys, waterfalls, and wetlands conjure up only one place in New York: the Bronx. If you've never seen the **New York Botanical Garden** (200th St. and Southern Blvd.; ✆ **718/817-8700**), you'll be amazed at the biological diversity here. It's arguably the country's greatest public garden. See p. 274.

- **Best Elephant Procession:** Forget Republican conventions—New York's best elephant show occurs when the **Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey** circus (✆ **212/465-6741**) comes to town. Once a year around midnight, the elephants (sometimes accompanied by zebras and camels) stroll through the Queens–Midtown Tunnel and across town to Madison Square Garden. As far as New York wildlife goes, this spectacle is hard to beat. See p. 279.

Long lines for free Shakespeare in the Park tickets can be daunting—luckily, you can now try www.publictheater.org for free tickets online. *See p. 63 for a full review.*

2 ENTERTAINMENT

For a little while in the boom years, it looked like dot.com zillionaires would be the only folks able to afford New York entertainment. Taverns upped cover charges, cigar and champagne bars came into fashion, and Broadway ticket prices went through the roof. But that was a whole different city. With youth pouring into the area and the economy on somewhat shaky ground, entertainment for the people has made a major comeback. It's easy to find top-tier dance, drama, film, and comedy for no more than the price of showing up. Shakespeare in the Park, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Upright Citizens Brigade are among the New York legends that give it

up for free. Big-time wits can be found at TV-show tapings, and big-name scribes make themselves accessible at complimentary literary readings. Meanwhile, music seeps up from the subway platforms and fills our parks and bars. Everything from jazz to classical to country to rock can be heard in NYC, and a surprising amount of it comes without cost. For those attractions that do charge, discerning patrons can easily keep the cost down in the $5 range. New York is a magnet for talent, and even the performances on the cheap end of the entertainment spectrum can be spectacular. In short, money should be no barrier to experiencing great New York entertainment. It's more an issue of time management.

FREE & DIRT CHEAP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

New York knows how to throw a party. Throughout the year, you can find massive celebrations of ancient tribal affiliations, sexual orientations, and pagan holidays. Most of these celebrations come free. Of course, event quality is in direct proportion to audience size. The Big Apple's big events draw huge crowds, and if you want a decent view, you'll have to stake out your spot hours early. Lesser events may be more spur-of-the-moment accessible, but four or five listless floats later you may find yourself fully sated with the rites of Zemblan Independence Day.

In addition to the numbers listed below, **NYC Visit,** the city's convention and visitor's bureau, has the lowdown on most events (✆ **212/484-1222;** www.nycvisit.com).

JANUARY

Midnight Run in Central Park FREE For a saner New Year's night than the Times Square hell, one option is to hook up with the New York Road Runners club. Their annual 4-mile Midnight Run takes racers from 68th Street to 102nd, and back around. The registration fee will set you back between $30 and $50, but if you don't feel an absolute need to get winded in the small hours, you can enjoy the pre-run dancing, costume show, and fireworks display for free. Dancing begins around 10pm and the parade starts an hour later. Gather near the Central Park Bandshell, just south of the 72nd Street Transverse. ✆ **212/860-4455.** www.nyrr.org. Subway: B/C to 72nd St.; 6 to 68th St. Midnight December 31 (Jan 1).

Brooklyn New Year's Prospect FREE There's no borough envy in Brooklyn as rival pyrotechnics welcome the new year above Prospect Park. Enjoy the fresh air as the embers cascade above the

Grand Army Plaza at the stroke of midnight. Prime viewing areas include West Drive and along Prospect Park West, between Grand Army Plaza and 9th Street. ✆ **718/965-8999.** www.prospectpark.org. Subway: 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza; B/Q to Seventh Ave. December 31 (Jan 1).

Idiotarod In late January, Brooklyn's brains turn to mushing. It's hard to believe that a committee of structural engineers came up with this idea, sober. The plan: to replace lovable blue-eyed sled dogs with teams of liquored-up bipeds, and have them drag shopping carts instead of sleds. The result is more *Cannonball Run* than athletic exposition, complete with dastardly competitors dropping marbles and banana peels along the route. The race begins in Brooklyn, but there is much last-minute rearranging to stay one step ahead of Johnny Law. There's a $20 to $40 registration fee per cart to participate (it's cheaper the earlier you sign up), but it goes toward cash prizes, and the event is free to watch. www.cartsofbrooklyn.com. Last Saturday in January.

February

Chinese New Year FREE Come January, Chinatown will be partying like it's 4707, in honor of the lunar new year. The omnipresent firecrackers of Chinese new years past have been taken out of the public's hands and entrusted to professionals at a central viewing area along Mott and Bayard, but there's still plenty of noise and chaos to go around. The annual parade sees dragon and lion dancers winding down Mott, across East Broadway, and back up along the Bowery. For a newer New York New Year's tradition, check out the flower market inside Columbus Park (Mulberry St., btw. Bayard and Worth sts.; ✆ 212/619-4785). The Museum of Chinese in America supplements supple blossoms with live performances. ✆ **212/966-0100.** www.betterchinatown.com. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St. Late January or early February.

March

Saint Patrick's Day Parade FREE The free entertainment on St. Patrick's Day starts on the subway ride. In years past I've ridden in cars that local teens have magically transformed into mini–Irish pubs, complete with energetic gossip, clouds of cigarette smoke, and Guinness cans rattling down the aisles. And then there's the parade. The green wave gathers momentum through Midtown and converges on Fifth Avenue, where 150,000 marchers (and at least that many spectators) celebrate Ireland's patron saint. Much of the crowd arrives well before

the 11am start time. The entertainment continues with live music and drunken shenanigans at New York's thousand-plus Irish pubs. Wear green or risk pinchery. The parade runs from 86th to 44th streets, right past Patrick's own cathedral. ✆ **718/231-4400.** www.nyc-st-patrick-day-parade.org. Subway: N/R/W or E/V to Fifth Ave. March 17.

Easter Parade FREE With the return of spring nature is reborn from the small deaths of winter, and what better way to symbolize new life than by showing off new threads? That's been the thinking behind New York's Easter Parade for almost a century and a half. More an informal procession than a parade, people join and leave as they please. Expect amazing hats and plenty of pastels. The stroll runs from 10am until 3 or 4pm, along Fifth Avenue between 48th and 57th streets. ✆ **212/484-1222.** Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave.; B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center. Easter Sunday.

April

Green Apple Festival FREE When Earth Day rolls around, I leave my diesel-powered Cadillacs in the garage and take my one subway ride of the year up to Central Park's Rumsey Playfield. Free live music plays, in concert with performances across town, which carry admission charges. In addition to the acts, there's eco awareness-raising activities like planting and mulching. The action starts at noon. Central Park, at the Rumsey Playfield, near East 72nd St. www.greenapplemusicfestival.com. Subway: 6 to 68th or 77th St.; B/C to 72nd St. Enter the park at 69th St. and Fifth Ave. Friday and Saturday on or before Earth Day.

Dachshund Friendship Festival FREE Twice a year New York's dachshunds gather with their humans in Washington Square Park to mix, mingle, and wear diabolically adorable little wiener outfits. Watch dachshund brides samba with dachshund cowboys before the whole herd runs in circles

FREE Pieces of April 1st

The press releases for Fifth Avenue's April Fool's Day Parade promise elaborate floats with budgets in the billions and throngs of costumed celebrities, but the most action you can hope to see at this event is the occasional irritated news crew standing around watching the traffic flow. Fox News and CNN have showed up for the parade in years past only to discover that they've been played for April fools. www.joeyskaggs.com.

around the center of the park. The festival ends with a chorus of "The Dachs Song." With the hounds lifted overhead and the spring air filled with the refrain of "Dachsie, meine dachsie," there's nary a dry eye to be found. Washington Square Park, bounded by Waverly Place, 4th Street, University Place, and MacDougal Street. ✆ **212/475-5512.** www.dachshundfriendshipclub.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq. Noon, the last Saturday in April, and again the first Saturday in October. Rain date Sunday.

MAY

Ninth Avenue International Food Festival FREE If some human in an obscure corner of the globe will shove it in his mouth and call it a comestible, odds are you can find it at this festival. Come mid-May, street-fair staples like Italian sausages and mozzerapa mingle with barbecued whole pigs, empanadas, and soy cupcakes from Ninth Avenue's indigenous roster. Do not miss the hot-from-the-oven Greek pastries from Poseidon Bakery, between 44th and 45th streets. Ninth Avenue, from West 37th to 57th streets. ✆ **212/581-7029.** www.hellskitchen.bz. Subway: A/C/E to 42nd St., 7 to Seventh Ave. From 9:30am to 6:30pm, Saturday and Sunday in mid-May.

NYC Dance Parade FREE From the cross-pollination of African and Irish tap dances in the Five Points slum to an impressive 20th-century run of ballet, ballrooms, and breakdancing, New York's dance legacy runs deep. In mid-May all of it goes on parade at once, a 6-hour affair with 4,000 dancers, many sporting elaborate

The Street Fair Sham

It takes less than a New York minute for a newcomer's excitement about "street fairs" and "block parties" to fizzle into the reality of another traffic-clogged exercise in low-end commerce. Each fair has the exact same CDs, massage stands, and three-for-a-buck socks (whose multitudinous apertures are more reminiscent of Swiss cheese than footwear). The deep-fried corn can be tasty if you're in a certain mood, and occasionally a band will play, but generally it's hard to fill more than a couple of minutes at one of these affairs. For two exceptions to the rule, see the Ninth Avenue International Food Festival, above, and the Feast of San Gennaro, below.

getups. The parade boogies from 28th Street and Broadway down to St. Marks Place, where a wrap-up festival goes off in Tompkins Square Park. Free lessons are thrown in as well. ✆ **212/501-4560.** www.dance parade.org. Saturday, mid-May, rain or shine.

Fleet Week FREE One week a year, New Yorkers get nostalgic at the sight of thousands of sailors on the make in the port of Manhattan. Squint and pretend it's V-E Day. Along the west-side piers you can get an even closer look: Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine reps will let you tour some of the floating behemoths you spent all those tax dollars on. ✆ **212/245-0072.** www.fleetweek.navy.mil or www.intrepidmuseum.org. Last week in May.

JUNE

Museum Mile Festival FREE The classiest fair in New York sees Fifth Avenue closed to car traffic so 50,000 culture vultures can take in Manhattan's Gold Coast to the sounds of string quartets. Kids get live performances and special arts and crafts opportunities. Nine of the museums that give the mile its moniker offer free admissions. And the classiest part of all? No vendors. Fifth Avenue, from 82nd to 105th streets. ✆ **212/606-2296.** www.museummilefestival.org. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.; 6 to 77th, 96th, or 103rd St. From 6 to 9pm, usually the first Tuesday in June.

Lesbian and Gay Pride Week and March FREE The city bursts with Pride every June in a week that begins with rallies and protests and ends in a dance, fireworks, and a parade. Pride commemorates the June 27, 1969, Stonewall Rebellion, where gay men first stood against police harassment outside the Stonewall Inn in the West Village. Nearly 4 decades later seeing Fifth Avenue overtaken by rainbows is a heartening sight, as the Sunday Gay Pride March wends its way from 52nd Street down into the Village. Just standing on a street corner downtown can be almost as entertaining as the parade, especially the spectacle of drag queens teetering on high heels as they rush across multiple lanes of traffic. ✆ **212/807-7433.** www.hopinc.org. Mid- to late June.

Puerto Rico Day Parade FREE Fifth Avenue's staid character goes into remission for the Puerto Rico Day parade. There's salsa music and festive floats and millions of spectators lining the way. The parade has been running annually since 1958, and despite some ugly incidents, it remains a quality spectacle. Fifth Avenue, from 44th to 86th

streets. ✆ **718/401-0404.** www.nationalpuertoricandayparade.org. From 11am to 6pm, the second Sunday in June.

Make Music New York! FREE The longest day of the year begets this citywide musical celebration. Inspired by the French Fête de la Musique, thousands of musicians take to the sidewalks of New York (as well as the parks, community gardens, and clubs) to play just for the sake of playing. Although only a couple of years old, this summer solstice event is quickly gathering momentum. ✆ **917/779-9709.** www.makemusicny.org. June 21.

Mermaid Parade FREE Old-time New Yorkers had one destination for the best in tattoos, sideshows, and amusement parks. In its '20s heyday, Coney Island saw over a million visitors a day. Now only a lone roller coaster survives, but some continuity with the glorious, tawdry past remains, especially during the eclectic freak show that is the Mermaid Parade. With body paint and beads—plus a few strategic scraps of fabric to keep things legal—the avatars of New York's retro-culture scene transform themselves into mermaids and Neptunes. Classic cars join the procession as the parade works its way up Surf Avenue, dispersing when the participants dash down the beach to the ageless Atlantic. In the evening, live bands can be heard at the **Mermaid Parade Ball** (check www.mermaidparadeball.com for the exact location); the $10 ticket price goes toward supporting the arts group Coney Island USA. The parade goes from West 10th and the boardwalk to West 16th to Surf Avenue and then back to West 10th. ✆ **718/372-5159.** www.coneyisland.com/mermaid.shtml. Subway: D/F/N/Q to Coney Island/Stillwell Ave., then walk toward the Atlantic. First Saturday after the summer solstice, 2 to 6pm.

JULY

Battery Park 4th of July Concert FREE New York puts the free back in freedom with an outdoor concert in Battery Park, featuring the likes of Emmylou Harris and the New Pornographers. There's a festive, laid-back vibe, with blankets spread on the grass and New York Harbor in the background. Gates open at 2pm and the show starts around 3:30pm. FINE PRINT Tickets are free, but must be reserved in advance online; make sure you login when they become available in June, and stay persistent. ✆ **212/835-2789.** www.downtownny.com. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 1 to S. Ferry. July 4.

Fourth of July Fireworks FREE In New York's previous incarnation, you knew July 4th was coming because starting mid-June your sleep was interrupted by nightly amateur fireworks shows. With quality-of-life crackdowns, however, The Man has taken up a monopoly on the summer eye-candy. Fortunately, The Man does a nice job of blowing up stuff for our entertainment. Macy's explodes 120,000 shells into the air over the East River in the 20s and 30s. At 7pm the FDR closes to traffic between 14th and 42nd streets and folks start to grab seats on the guardrails. If you're not totally Manhattancentric, the other side of the river has equally good views. Try Hunter's Point in Long Island City, Queens, or Greenpoint in Brooklyn. ✆ **212/494-2922.** www.macys.com. July 4th.

August

Harlem Week FREE Harlem Day was first celebrated in 1975, and over the subsequent 3 decades it has grown from a day to a week to an entire month of cultural celebration. Harlem Week now includes the Black Film Festival and the Harlem Jazz and Music Festival. The two biggest days come in the middle of the month, with Uptown Saturday Nite taking over West 135th Street between Malcolm X Boulevard and St. Nicholas Avenue. Sunday is Harlem Day, from 10am to 9pm. (Rain dates are the following weekend.) West 135th, between Fifth and St. Nicholas avenues. ✆ **212/862-8477.** www.harlemdiscover.com. Subway: B/C to 135th St.; 1 to 137th St. From noon to 9pm, the month of August.

The Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in New York FREE Dragon boats date back thousands of years, to races conducted during celebrations of the fifth lunar month of the Chinese calendar. The boats' appearance on Meadow Lake in Queens is a little more recent (1990), with a racing roster growing from four original teak specimens to some thirty sleek fiberglass models. Bands, theatrical and dance performances, and dumpling eating contests augment the races. Flushing Meadows Park, Flushing, Queens. ✆ **718/767-1776.** www.hkdbf-ny.org. Subway: 7 to Willets Point/Shea Stadium, transfer to the special event bus. Saturday and Sunday, 9am to 5pm, usually in early August.

Howl! Festival of East Village Arts FREE Though the East Village's legendary artistic past is increasingly obscured by layers of gentrifying paint, late August sees a return of the old contrarian spirit. The Howl! Festival serves up theater, live music, and art. Although there's

an admission charge for some events (usually reasonable, in the $5–$10 range), many are free, like the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Festival in Tompkins Square Park. Avenue A, between 7th and 10th streets. ✆ **212/673-5433.** www.howlfestival.com. Subway: L to First Ave.; 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St. Late August, early September.

September

Tugboat Festival FREE One day a year New York's attention-starved tugs get some play at the Intrepid Museum's annual Tugboat Festival. The rites begin with a tug parade down the Hudson, continue with nose-to-nose tug-pushing-tug contests, races, and line-throwing competitions, and conclude with prizes for best crew and best tattoo. Pier 86. Twelfth Avenue, at 46th Street. ✆ **212/245-0072.** www.intrepidmuseum.org. Subway: N/Q/R/Q/1/2/3/7 to Times Sq.; A/C/E to 42nd St./Port Authority. From 12:30 to 4pm, usually the Sunday before Labor Day.

West Indian-American Day Parade FREE New York's biggest parade takes place a long way from Fifth Avenue, along Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. Two million revelers (yup, *2,000,000*) come together on Labor Day to move to Caribbean rhythms and dine on jerk chicken, oxtail, and roti. The route varies, but generally follows Eastern Parkway at Utica Avenue in Crown Heights down to the arch at Grand Army Plaza in Prospect Heights. ✆ **718/467-1797.** www.wiadca.com. Subway: 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza. From 11am to 6pm, Labor Day.

The Art Parade FREE Ever-playful Deitch Projects joins forces with the arts group Creative Time and *Paper Magazine* to put on this annual perambulating spectacle. The spirit of an older, departed SoHo prevails, with artists and performers donning outlandish attire to accompany floats, walking sculptures, and marching bands with mattresses strapped surreally to their backs. The parade is small-scale but tons of fun, running along West Broadway between West Houston and Grand streets. ✆ **212/343-7300.** www.deitch.com. Subway: 1 or A/C/E to Canal St. 4pm, the Saturday after Labor Day.

September Concert FREE Under any other circumstances, a day bringing hundreds of performers to dozens of venues across all five boroughs would be cause for upbeat excitement, but the context of the September Concert is a somber one. To commemorate the World Trade Center attacks, the city fills with the healing sounds of music. Throughout the day, find free sounds in the city's cafes, bars, libraries, squares, and parks. It's a perfect excuse for people to be together. ✆ **212/333-3399.**

www.septemberconcert.org. Multiple venues; check the website. From noon to 10pm, September 11.

The Feast of San Gennaro FREE This is New York's oldest and biggest street fair—eleven days of zeppoles, pork braciole, and deep-fried Oreos in honor of the patron saint of Naples. Little Italy main drag Mulberry Street becomes an extremely narrow small-town carnival. There are rides for the kids, cannoli-eating contests for the adults, and an abusive clown in a dunking booth that's discomfiting for everybody. With the heavy emphasis on commerce and the beer-addled crowds, the fair gets old fairly quickly. Mulberry Street, between Canal and Houston, with runoff on Hester and Grand. ✆ **212/226-6427.** www.sangennaro.org. Subway: N/R/W to Prince St.; 6 to Spring St. or Canal St. Starts the second Thursday in September, from 11:30am to 11:30pm (to midnight Fri–Sat).

October

CultureFest FREE This just in: There's a lot of culture to be found in NYC. You can sample a huge slice of it at once at this annual event, which brings together some 125 organizations. The typical local fare on offer covers flamenco to *taiko* drumming to klezmer to Himalayan-inflected jazz. There's also art, crafts, and food aplenty spread out across Battery Park. State Street and Battery Place. ✆ **212/484-1200.** www.nycvisit.com. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 1 to S. Ferry. From 11am to 5:30pm, rain or shine, Saturday and Sunday in mid-October.

New York's Great Halloween Party FREE The hobgoblins of little minds can be found in haunted sites across 40 of the city's back acres come Halloween. Central Park fills with excitable costumed children, looking for the perfect pumpkin among the 7,500 scattered among the straw at the Bethesda Fountain. Once the little demons have made their incisions they take the resulting jack-o'-lanterns north, to the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, midpark at 110th Street. A parade is followed by an annual pumpkin sail, where the jack-o'-lanterns glow on the Harlem Meer as they float gently away. ✆ **212/860-1370.** www.centralparknyc.org. Subway: 6 to 68th or 77th St.; 1/2/3/B/C to 72nd St. Generally 3:30 to 6:30pm. Saturday, a few days before Halloween (date varies).

Greenwich Village Halloween Parade FREE For many New Yorkers, every day feels like Halloween. Come late October, the last thing we need to wade through is another crowd of freaks. Fight this

instinct, however, and you will enjoy New York's most underrated holiday. The central event is the annual Halloween parade. Running up Sixth Avenue from Spring to 23rd, the parade shows off New Yorkers' legendary gallows humor. If you're feeling restless, the surrealistic collisions between fellow viewers—javelin-toting African warriors kibitzing with drag-queen astronauts—are entertainment enough. ***Note:*** This parade is one of New York's most participatory events (anyone costumed can join); no one will think any less of you for not being covered in body paint or latex, but you run the risk of feeling like you're in a wet-blanket minority. ✆ **845/758-5519.** www.halloween-nyc.com. Subway: C/E to Spring St.; A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.; F/V/L to 14th St. October 31, with the coming of night.

November

The New York Marathon As much fun as it looks to completely deplete your body while forming manhole-sized blisters from pounding 26.2 miles of hard pavement, I'm happy to leave the marathoning to the pros. There is five boroughs' worth of prime viewing territory, and the steady stream of runners, with their varied looks of determination and exhaustion, has an unexpected poetry. The race ends in Central Park near Tavern on the Green, where you can watch the survivors, adorned in the glory of heat-retaining silver blankets, as they walk it off. The race begins in the morning, with the elite runners getting off around 11am. ✆ **212/423-2249.** www.ingnycmarathon.org. Subway (to Central Park): B/C to 72nd St. First Sunday in November.

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade FREE New York's favorite excuse for dragging bloated floating cartoon characters down the west side of the city comes with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Rocky, Bullwinkle, and Garfield join slightly-less-inflated celebrities to march down Central Park West from 77th Street to Columbus Circle, where they turn onto Broadway and head straight for the Mothership (Macy's in Herald Sq.). The wee ones love this event, and crowds are thick, with a lot of prime viewing territory reserved for VIPs, so arrive well before the scheduled start time. ***Tip:*** Balloon fanatics can get a head start on the action the night before, when the balloons get their helium fixes on the broad sidewalks around the Natural History Museum. ✆ **212/494-4495.** www.macysparade.com. Subway: B/C to 72nd St.; A/B/C/D/1 to Columbus Circle. From 9am to noon, Thanksgiving morning.

DECEMBER

Lighting of the Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center FREE
The week after Thanksgiving marks the first major "Gridlock Alert" of the holiday shopping season. Traffic comes to a near stop on the blocks around Rockefeller Center. Down on the rink, professional ice-skaters make graceful turns, live music plays, and Hizzonner throws the switch on 30,000 bulbs strung along 5 miles of wire. Rock Center's overflow crowd, many of whom have been waiting in the cold for 4 or 5 hours, cheer with relief. Even for grinches like myself, watching the tree come alive is a pretty cool moment, but they'd have to make the spruce levitate while spouting a fountain of $50 bills for me to want to weather that crowd twice. Better to come back at a more mellow time, especially if you can visit at dusk, when the tree is at its most quietly dramatic. ✆ **212/332-6868.** www.rockefellercenter.com. B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center. At 9pm, the Wednesday after Thanksgiving.

Alternatives to the Rockefeller Tree Lighting FREE It's not like Rock Center has the only Christmas tree in New York City. The Winter Garden at the World Financial Center sets 100,000 lights softly glowing. More elaborate rites can be found at Lincoln Center's Christmas celebration, usually held on the Monday after Thanksgiving. A tree lighting supplements crafts booths and live music along Broadway and Columbus from 61st to 68th streets. You'll find plenty for the kids, and the crowds are a fraction of Rock Center's. World Financial Center: ✆ **212/945-0505.** www.worldfinancialcenter.com. Subway: 1/2/3/A/C to Chambers St. Lincoln Center BID: ✆ **212/581-3774.** www.wintereve.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Festival of Lights FREE If you want to celebrate the other half of the Judeo–Christian cultural tradition, you can attend the lighting of Midtown's menorah. This skyscraping candle-holder (at 32 ft., it's the world's largest) shines at sunset on the first night of Hanukkah, gaining another light on each of the following 7 days. Grand Army Plaza on Fifth Avenue, at 59th Street. ✆ **917/287-7770.** Subway: N/R/Q/W to Fifth Ave.; F to 57th St. During Hanukkah.

The Station at Citigroup Center FREE Most New Yorkers don't have the surplus square footage for obsessive train sets, but fortunately the Citigroup Center does. Goggle-eyed urchins revel in a massive whirring creation that portrays all the regions and seasons of New York State. Thirty-two rail and trolley lines ply the byways for the holiday month between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Visiting is free, but the

show is popular, so expect plenty of company. Citigroup Center, 153 E. 53rd Street at Lexington Avenue. ✆ **212/559-1747.** www.dunhamstudios.com/cititour.htm. Subway: E/V to Lexington Ave.; 6 to 51st St. Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm; Sunday noon to 5pm.

A Brooklyn Christmas FREE

The big department stores offer the sidewalks plenty of entertainment with elaborate window displays, but for my money, New York's best free Christmas show is in Brooklyn. Homeowners from Bay Ridge to Bensonhurst run up the Keyspan bills to bring bulb envy to their neighbors. Dyker Heights is "Christmas Central," with 100,000 tourists drawn every year to the blocks around 80th and 86th streets, between Tenth and Thirteenth avenues. Choruses of mechanical Santas and snowmen compete to prove the lights are always brighter on the other side of the fence. Take the D/M to 79th Street or the R to 86th Street and walk toward the lines of wide-eyed-munchkin-packed minivans. Between Thanksgiving and New Year's.

FREE Free Radical Theater

New York supplements its famous parades with other festive mass gatherings: protest marches and rallies. Whether you're standing up to be counted or just on the sidelines digging the spectacle, you won't find yourself shorted on stimuli. New Yorkers have sharp senses of humor and the creative placards alone are worth a look. The confluence of political relevance and cutting cultural commentary recurs often, as in this gem:

BEN AFFLECK IS A TERRIBLE ACTOR.
NO WAR IN IRAQ.

There's no arguing with at least one of those points.

New Year's Concert for Peace at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine FREE Leonard Bernstein inaugurated this event, and in the subsequent decades, it's become a beautifully honed candlelit legend. Opera stars and world-class conductors headline the bills, and the vibe inside the world's largest Gothic cathedral is surprisingly intimate. The best seats are reserved and come with steep price tags, but general seating is free. FINE PRINT Show up early, as the 6,000-person capacity has been reduced by recent repair work. Cathedral of St. John the Divine. 1047 Amsterdam Ave., at 112th St. ✆ **212/316-7540.** www.stjohndivine.org. Subway: 1 or B/C to Cathedral Parkway/110th St. December 31.

1 Music Uncovered

New York is in the midst of yet another great rock-'n'-roll scare. A slew of young bands have rediscovered the jittery energy of New York's '70s and '80s heyday, and they're threatening to become a movement. Phosphorescent, the Hold Steady, and the National are among a slew of exciting acts to have put down recent Brooklyn roots. It's not just rock, either. Classical performances, acoustic acts, salsa bands, jazz quartets, and even alt-country make a stand in Yankee confines. The only fly in this ointment is capitalism; the bars have to pay rent. Most places try to keep the booze flowing, although with a few exceptions New York is not super uptight about enforcing its drink minimums. The musicians certainly don't care—most of the time they're just happy you're there to listen. You'll find free music waiting 7 nights a week. You might as well embrace the cacophony, because Lord knows it's hard to find a quiet hour in New York City.

FREE Free & E-Zines

With a city in endless flux and so much stuff going on, it's hard to stay abreast of the best in free and cheap events. My favorite means of keeping up is via electronic newsletters, conveniently e-mailed right to my inbox. Of the e-lists, **Nonsensenyc**'s (www.nonsensenyc.com) is my favorite, specializing in the cheap and offbeat, and providing a comprehensive rundown of the city's many hipster events. Other newsletters worth reading can be found at **www.dailycandy.com**, **www.flavorpill.net**, and **www.manhattanusersguide.com**.

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK

Banjo Jim's FREE This inheritor to 9C's mantle hasn't changed the space or sound much. Solid live alt-country and rock still fill most bills, with a little Loisaida Latin flavor thrown in as well. Music runs 7 nights a week, with multiple acts on offer, and weekend afternoons feature jam sessions. Outside of the occasional festival there's no cover (although the hat is passed), and the one-drink minimum is loosely enforced.

700 E. 9th St., at Ave. B. ✆ **212/777-0869.** www.banjojims.com. Subway: L to First Ave.

The Lakeside Lounge FREE The Lakeside may lack in lake views, but it has no shortage of great music. Steve Earle, Amy Allison, and Freedy Johnston have all played here. The back room that holds the stage is tiny, so you're guaranteed an intimate experience. If you arrive late, there's extra standing room off to the side. Never a cover, or a minimum, and during set breaks you can purchase yourself a souvenir from the notorious black-and-white photo booth.

162 Ave. B, btw. 10th and 11th sts. ✆ **212/529-8463.** www.lakesidelounge.com. Subway: L to First Ave.

The Living Room A mellow music mecca, the Living Room hosts a slate of live performances every night, biased toward acoustic and otherwise low-key up-and-comers. Shows here are increasingly high profile, with the occasional national act storming through. Usually no cover, though they do pass the hat and suggest a $5 contribution, and there's a one-drink minimum.

154 Ludlow St., btw. Stanton and Rivington sts. ✆ **212/533-7235.** www.livingroomny.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Parkside Lounge Nestled between projects and East Village tenements, this former brothel brings in an eclectic crowd. Being too far east for most trendroids helps, too. The back room puts on rock shows and electric Friday-night salsa. Comedy and improv also appear on the calendar. FINE PRINT If there's a cover, it'll be $5 or so for the band and often a two-drink minimum applies, although it's loosely enforced.

317 E. Houston St., at Attorney St. ✆ **212/673-6270.** www.parksidelounge.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

FREE Chelsea Pickin'

The Chelsea Market Music Hallway splits the difference between a venue and a subway platform, allowing buskers the opportunity to play for a sampling of the 10,000 pairs of ears that pass through daily. The music on offer is as diverse as the city itself, rolling from blues to bluegrass to jazz to Latin. (Despite the high cringe potential, Dixieland, a capella, and vaudeville also make the cut.) All shows are free on the ground floor; check online for scheduling. 75 Ninth Ave., btw. 15th and 16th sts. www.chelseamarket.com. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Pete's Candy Store FREE So much good music comes through here that you'll feel like a kid in a great music venue. Housed in a friendly former fountain shop on a quiet Williamsburg block, the small stage area in back brings in surprisingly big acts. There's also a rotating selection of nonmusical entertainment, from readings to Scrabble to quiz night (check out "Word Up: Readings" and "Game Night," on p. 88 and 82, respectively). No cover or drink minimum, but the staff encourages contributions to the musicians' tip jar.

709 Lorimer St., btw. Frost and Richardson sts., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/302-3770.** www.petescandystore.com. Subway: L to Lorimer St.; G to Metropolitan Ave.

Rockwood Music Hall It took some vision—and a well-developed sense of irony—to conceive of these two postage stamp–size spaces as a "music hall." The close quarters don't seem to scare off the crowds, though, and the intimacy makes for great sound. Local singer-songwriters are interspersed with the occasional touring band, usually at least six acts per night. The sidewalk outside hosts a hopping overflow scene. Never a cover, but there is a one-drink minimum.

196 Allen St., btw. Houston and Stanton sts. ✆ **212/477-4155.** www.rockwoodmusichall.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Rodeo Bar This is as country as Manhattan gets, which admittedly isn't saying much. Rodeo's sprawling space doesn't have the feel of an intimate honky-tonk, but the stage area is segregated and more or less self-contained. The cream of the local crop rounds up here, as do a host of great national acts. Mostly Americana and alt-country (whatever that is). There's no cover, usually a one-drink minimum.

Avoid the "Rock Bars" Around NYU

Close to NYU in the West Village sits a cluster of "rock bars" that purport to offer "no cover" entertainment. This is as pure a tourist trap as New York offers, as the various clubs try to cash in on their West Village cache. Although the joints may boast Bleecker or MacDougal addresses, there is little of the neighborhood's old rock-'n'-roll spirit here. The patrons are almost exclusively bridge-and-tunnel burbsters, drinks are overpriced, and the best you can hope for music-wise is an earnest cover band. If you want to hear at least one original thought per set, better to avoid this zone altogether.

375 Third Ave., at 27th St. ✆ **212/683-6500.** www.rodeobar.com. Subway: 6 to 28th St.

Sidewalk Café Having outlived the other live-music spots on Avenue A, the Café serves as a home base for East Village singer-songwriters. A little comedy and open mics get thrown in as well. Each night sees a big bunch of acts. FINE PRINT No cover, but a two-drink minimum during performances.

94 Ave. A, at 6th St. ✆ **212/473-7373.** www.sidewalkmusic.net. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Sound Fix Lounge FREE Williamsburghers get their music fixes at this indie record store. In back is a coffee shop/bar that hosts frequent live shows. You can find open mics, high-wattage guests like Regina Spektor, and alt-comedy shows like I Like Attention. The performances are free, and there's cheap beer in cans. Look also for periodic listening parties, with free pizza and PBR.

110 Bedford Ave., at N. 11th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/388-8090.** www.soundfixrecords.com. Subway: L to Bedford Ave.

JAZZ IT UP

Arthur's Tavern A West Village relic, Arthur's would be eligible for social security if it were a person and not an amiable, low-rent jazz joint. The music runs the Dixieland-to-trio gamut, and the quality can be spotty, but something's on stage 7 nights a week. FINE PRINT No cover, but a one-drink per set minimum.

57 Grove St., btw. Bleecker and W. 4th sts. ✆ **212/675-6879.** www.arthurstavernnyc.com. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

Cleopatra's Needle Organ trios and quartets highlight the calendar at this Upper West Side neighborhood club. On Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons things get even more neighborhoody with open mics. In the wee hours, the floor belongs to jam sessions. Never a cover, though there is a $10 minimum per set. A decent Mediterranean menu provides an alternative to boozing the night away. Shows start at 8pm.

2485 Broadway, btw. 92nd and 93rd sts. ✆ **212/769-6969.** www.cleopatrasneedleny.com. Subway: 1/2/3 to 96th St.

Ear Inn FREE This laid-back old-timer was once a waterfront tavern, although in the course of a couple of centuries, the Hudson has slipped a block or two. There's solid dinner fare and pints aplenty

here, and Monday through Wednesday you can enjoy midnight music. Jazz and blues are the usual Ear candy, although country and folk sneak in as well. Sunday evenings at 8pm the earegulars perform jazz variations on trumpet, reed, guitar, and bass.

326 Spring St., btw. Greenwich and Washington sts. ✆ 212/226-9060. www.earinn.com. **Subway: C/E to Spring St.; 1 to Canal St.**

55 Bar Still not entirely recovered from its Prohibition days, 55 Bar has been entertaining the Village on the sly since 1919. The cluttered room brings in top-shelf acts. The cover charges reflect it on some nights (they can run as high as $15), but generally you can slip in for a pittance (say, $5). Tuesday and Sunday nights are your best bets for inexpensive jazz. You'll find other no-cover nights, and the early shows are often free. FINE PRINT Officially, there's a two-drink minimum, but the laid-back staff enforces it loosely.

55 Christopher St., btw. Seventh Ave. and Waverly Place. ✆ 212/929-9883. www.55bar.com. **Subway: 1 to Christopher St.**

Zebulon FREE The French owners here manage to blend European sophistication with the low-pretense quotient of greater Brooklyn. Afrobeat, funk, and improv jazz lead the charge. A tin ceiling and jazz posters and album covers add to the charm. There's never a cover (although the hat is passed), and drinks are inexpensive, at least by contemporary standards.

258 Wythe Ave., btw. Metropolitan Ave. and N. 3rd St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/218-6934. www.zebuloncafeconcert.com. **Subway: L to Bedford Ave.**

CLASSICAL ACTS

Gotham's classical pedigree is hard to knock, as we boast the nation's oldest orchestra (the New York Philharmonic), on top of a couple of venues whose renown just might extend beyond New York Harbor (Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center leap to mind). The future of music can also be found here, with the nation's most prominent conservatories (think Juilliard) settled on Manhattan schist. Although high prices can accompany the high notes, you aren't obligated to pay through the nose for auditory ecstasy. Schools present a bevy of free shows, big-name venues offer obstructed-view cheap seats, and the Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera both gig for free in the summer (see "High Culture for Free," in the Outdoor Summer Concerts section, later in this chapter). So weigh your musical options before settling for that Quiet Riot tribute band on Bleecker Street.

FREE The Underground Scene

In this modern world it's hard to find a spontaneous public expression that can't be codified and regulated. Even street performers in New York get caught up in bureaucracy's net, but the result is (mostly) high-quality music providing the soundtrack to our transfers and eye-contact avoidance. The New York Metropolitan Transit Authority's program is called "Music Under New York" (www.mta.info/mta/aft/muny), and it allows preselected performers to legally play at preselected stations. Times Square, Penn Station, Union Square, and Columbus Circle are the most heavily trafficked in the system, and it takes very little to draw an audience. In addition to the ubiquitous pan-flute Andean bands and tumbling demonstrations, you can hear amplified funk bands, jazz quartets, weird Chinese bow work, Brazilian drumming, blues, gospel, Calypso, and rock. The quality often competes with the music played aboveground on gel-lit stages. Not bad for the price of a swipe.

Bargemusic FREE Of all the world's barges dedicated to chamber music, this one is my favorite. Docked just off the Fulton Ferry landing in Brooklyn Heights, the recital room here hosts over a hundred concerts a year. Tickets are generally $35, but at least once a month one concert is given away (usually Sat at 1pm). It's "pot-luck," so you won't know the program until showtime, but it'll be classical, and the performance will be intimate. (There are only 130 seats.) No reservations are taken, so show up before the doors open, which is an hour before showtime.

26 New Dock St., at Water St., at the East River. ✆ 718/624-2083. www.bargemusic.org. Subway: 2/3 to Clark St.; A/C to High St.

The Bronx Symphony Orchestra With 6 decades of music making, this entirely democratic group has plenty of experience in bringing Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, and Mozart to the masses. All the concerts were once free, but funding constraints have made them a mix of ticketed (still inexpensive, in the $7–$12 range) and complimentary. Check the website for the calendar and locations, which hit all corners of the borough.

Various locations around the Bronx. ✆ 718/601-9151. www.bronxsymphony.org.

Carnegie Hall If you don't mind part of a support column affecting your sightlines, you can waltz right into Carnegie Hall for a mere Hamilton. The first-come, first-served partial-view seats become available at the box office at noon on the day of the show (limit two per person). If a show is presented by Carnegie Hall and it's taking place in the Stern Auditorium or the Perelman Stage, it's eligible for the cheap treatment. (The exceptions are gala events and Carnegie Hall Family Concerts, but the latter are a bargain in their own right—targeted to the wee ones, tickets are only $9.) Carnegie Hall also takes its show on the road. The Neighborhood Concert Series fans out across all five boroughs, bringing everything from classical to jazz to folk. Some 80 shows a year are performed for free—check the website for details.

154 W. 57th St., at Seventh Ave. ✆ **212/247-7800.** www.carnegiehall.org. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle; N/Q/R/W to 57th St.–Seventh Ave.

City Opera Since its 1944 inception, City Opera has strived to be an accessible alternative to the Met. With innovative programming, at times the upstart can even eclipse its rival. Though premium tickets top out over $130, on the day of the show you can get in the standing-room-only section for $16. Tickets go on sale at the box office, Monday to Saturday at 10am, and Sunday at 11:30am. Fourth-ring nosebleeds are also available in advance for $16. Or save that $16 by attending the VOX: Showcasing American Composers program, which comes around every spring. Some dozen young composers get a chance to air their work, and the public gets to preview the future of opera. Free tickets can be reserved online for the performances at NYU's Skirball Center downtown (565 LaGuardia Place at Washington Sq. Park S.; www.vox-nyco.com).

City Opera, New York State Theater, 20 Lincoln Center. ✆ **212/870-5570.** www.nycopera.com. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Free for All at Town Hall FREE One of the city's newer classical programs, the 2008 Free for All put on two free performances at gracious Town Hall. From solo piano to string quartets, the shows bring serious music to knowledgeable fans. Tickets are distributed at the box office, two per person, at noon on the day of the show. Usually on Sunday evenings in late spring.

123 W. 43rd St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Broadway. ✆ **212/707-8787.** www.freeforallattownhall.org. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 1/2/3/7/N/Q/R/S/W to 42nd St./Times Sq.

Joseph Patelson Music House

FREE This long-running sheet music vendor, in the shadow of Carnegie Hall, carries over 60,000 titles. They bulwark their wares with a "Music Comes Alive" series. Performances from the likes of the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players are scattered across the calendar, and there are regular Thursday evening music conversations (5:30–7pm) with free wine and cheese. Check the website for details.

160 W. 56th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/582-5840.** www.patelson.com. Subway: N/Q/R/W or F to 57th St.

The Juilliard School FREE

Juilliard's reputation couldn't be much more burnished, with luminaries like Philip Glass, Yo-Yo Ma, and Itzhak Perlman among its alums. Since its current students are nominally amateurs, the Lincoln Center school presents most of its concerts for free. Soloists play Morse and Paul Hall, and you can catch the entire orchestra at Alice Tully Hall. Though there is no charge, tickets are required for some shows, available from the box office up to 2 weeks prior to the show. Regular lunchtime concerts keep NYC's morale up; Tuesdays at 12:30pm, an office building atrium at 180 Maiden Lane hosts student performances (see p. 318 in "Free & Dirt Cheap Days"); and "Wednesdays at One" programs enrich the Society for Ethical Culture (2 West 64th St. at Central Park West). Tuesdays run most of the year, but Wednesdays are limited to the school year. Both are free with no tickets required.

60 Lincoln Center Plaza. ✆ **212/769-7406.** www.juilliard.edu. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

FREE Quarter Pounding the Keys

McDonald's and classical music go together like a Big Mac and fries. Er, maybe not. Sunday afternoons see a bizarre cultural collision at the McDonald's nearest Ground Zero. Classical pianist Andrew Shapiro, and his occasional guests, layer additional atmosphere onto the scents of seared meat with lovely sessions of new-agey music. Tourists wander in with only an occasional perplexed glance at the grand piano in the window of the second-floor balcony. For erudite music fans, this is probably the calmest it's possible to feel inside a McDonald's. 160 Broadway, btw. Liberty and Cortlandt sts. ✆ **212/385-2063.** www.andrewshapiro.com. Sundays, sets beginning at noon, 1, 2, and 3pm.

Manhattan School of Music FREE With an Art Deco auditorium among its seven venues, there's no shortage of places to listen here. Classical music performances are joined by jazz, which snuck into the curriculum after MSM's founding 90 years ago. Many shows are free to the public (no ticket required, although reservations are requested for some), as are a series of master classes. Nearby Riverside Park hosts even more performances, at the 116th Street Overlook on mild-weather Sunday afternoons. Most events take place during the school year; check online for a full schedule.

601 W. 122nd St., at Broadway. ✆ **917/493-4428.** www.msmnyc.edu. Subway: 1 to 125th St.

Mannes College of Music FREE During the school year, this 90-year-old institution presents some 400 free concerts. Student groups include baroque chamber, guitar, brass, and opera ensembles. Two concert halls at the college's headquarters host the free shows. There are also remote performances at places like the New School (Mannes merged with it in 1989), where lunchtime performances are followed by receptions. Check the website's calendar for the full listings.

150 W. 85th St., btw. Amsterdam and Columbus aves. ✆ **212/580-0210,** ext. 4817. www.mannes.edu. Subway: B/C to 86th St.

Metropolitan Opera The Met is the biggest (240 shows a year, each with seating for 4,000) and the best, with elaborate productions and unrivalled star power. Seats start around $26 and soar

FREE Divine Inspiration: Concerts at the Churches

Even heathens can find entertainment under the city's steeples. Choirs are only the beginning, as recitals and operas also take the altars, often for free. Worker bees downtown love the **"Concerts at One"** series at **St. Paul's Chapel** and **Trinity Church (p. 321).** My personal faves are the performances by the **New York Repertory Orchestra.** Though this all-volunteer group has many amateurs in its ranks, the renditions of Brahms, Mahler, and Stravinsky are all professional. Programming is adventurous, and the shows are free. Usually Saturday nights at 8pm. Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St., btw. Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. ✆ **212/662-8383.** www.nyro.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

from there to over $375. In addition to the free summer shows (see below), standing-room-only tickets can be found. Prices tend to be $20 for orchestra and $15 for family circle, available online with a $5.50 surcharge. "Day of" standing room is also available for $15 from the box office, cash only, limit two tickets per person, and the line gets long quickly.

Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center, btw. W. 62nd and 65th sts. and Columbus and Amsterdam aves. ✆ 212/362-6000. www.metoperafamily.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

New York Grand Opera FREE Conductor Vincent La Selva has spent the last 30 years performing the quixotic—or Sisyphean—task of mounting fully staged grand operas for no charge. He's pulled it off, too, with compelling performances that shine despite the occasional lack of polish. Shows go on in Central Park at the Naumburg Bandshell, weather permitting.

Naumburg Bandshell, Central Park, midpark, just below 72nd St. ✆ 212/245-8837. www.newyorkgrandopera.org. Subway: B/C to 72nd St.; 6 to 68th St./Hunter College.

New York Philharmonic The Philharmonic has been satisfying New Yorkers since 1842. The symphony's international fame translates into pricey tickets (usually it's over $100 to sit in the orchestra), but pikers needn't despair. In addition to free summer shindigs in the parks (see below), the Philharmonic performs the odd show around town, including the free annual Memorial Day performance at St. John the Divine. There are also low-priced kid-friendly shows, and the Open Rehearsal program. Watching a piece take shape under a conductor's molding is a fascinating process, and it's only $16 to sit in.

Avery Fisher Hall, 10 Lincoln Center Plaza. ✆ 212/875-5900. www.nyphil.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Peoples' Symphony Concerts A good bet on I.B.M. stock in 1923 is the basis for the endowment of these popular populist concerts. Three separate groupings, the Festival, Chamber, and Artists' Series, give the people the world-class ensembles they demand. Festival shows are held at Town Hall, and the two others are at Washington Irving High School (with a 1,500-seat capacity and good acoustics, this is not your high school's auditorium). Most single tickets are $9 to $11, but if you invest in a series subscription, the per-show price dips to the $6 to $8 range.

Washington Irving High School, 16th St., at Irving Place. ✆ **212/586-4680.** www.pscny.org. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq. Other location: *Town Hall*, 123 W. 43rd St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Broadway. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 1/2/3/7/N/Q/R/S/W to 42nd St./Times Sq.

Wall to Wall at Symphony Space FREE This long-running giveaway is a long runner, filling the Symphony Space stage with some 12 hours of music. The focus changes from year to year, with one creator singled out for comprehensive exploration. The range is extensive, Bach to Beethoven to Joni Mitchell to Kurt Weill. Performances start at 10:30am, but folks will line up hours before that. Openings in the general admission seating come in waves, every 3 hours or so. The event usually coincides with the Upper West Fest; check the website for exact dates.

Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. ✆ **212/864-5400.** www.symphonyspace.org. Subway: 1/2/3 to 96th St.

OUTDOOR SUMMER CONCERTS

The high season for free music is summer, when cool sounds seem to be coming from every corner of the city. You would think that with so many events the crowds would spread thin, but concerts tend to be consistently well attended. If you're going primarily to see the band, better allow at least an hour to carve out some space. For particularly big names you'll have to get there even earlier. If the scene is more interesting than the sound, however, New York concerts are laid-back enough that you can just wander in and out as the mood strikes you. With concerts at so many spectacular sites, a sunset on the Hudson or late afternoon light on the Brooklyn skyline often come with your (metaphorical) price of admission (pretty much everything is free).

BAM Rhythm & Blues Festival at MetroTech FREE MetroTech Commons is as close to a municipal center as Brooklyn gets, and in the summer it's the site of a free lunchtime concert series. As the name suggests, R&B is the focus, though the definition stretches to include blues, reggae, and funk as well. Surprisingly big names like the Neville Brothers and Ohio Players come through. Ten shows are held in all, Thursdays from noon to 2pm, mid-June to mid-August.

MetroTech Commons, at Flatbush and Myrtle aves. ✆ **718/636-4100.** www.bam.org. Subway: 2/3 to Hoyt St.; M/R to Lawrence St.; A/C/F to Jay St./Borough Hall.

Free Outdoor Summer Concerts

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Saturday	Sunday
Martin Luther King, Jr., Concert Series, 7:30pm	Naumburg Orchestral Concerts, 7:30pm	Madison Square Park, 7pm	BAM Rhythm & Blues Festival at MetroTech, noon	East River Park Amphitheater, 1pm	Harlem Meer Performance Festival, 4pm
	Washington Square Music Festival, 8pm	Rockefeller Park, 7pm	Castle Clinton, 7pm		Summer-Garden at the MoMA, 8pm
	World Financial Center, 7pm		Seaside Summer Concert Series, Coney Island, 7pm		
			Summer Soul Nights, Battery Park, 7pm		

Battery Park FREE Battery Park has the city's most spectacular gardens and shoreline, but its corner-pocket location causes it to be overlooked. Come quitting time, much of the working crowd rushes off to subway cars and ferries, leaving the rest of us more space to enjoy the cultural resources. The River to River festival cosponsors several summer concerts down here, many of which are underattended by New York standards. There's no better way to watch dusk settle over the island. My favorite spot is **Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park,** at the south end of the park. Boat traffic in New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty provide the backdrop. A little ways north is the **World Financial Center Plaza.** Nestled between the Winter Garden and the North Cove Yacht Harbor, the space rings into life on Tuesday nights in summer when live bands play. Recent booking has brought in some solid indie rockers like Fountains of Wayne. Shows also begin at 7pm. Wednesday nights the place to be is **Rockefeller Park,** on the northernmost end of Battery Park, for another series of 7 o'clock concerts. Indie rock and alt-country are favored here, with biggish names like the Old 97's making the scene. Check www.rivertorivernyc.org for full schedules.

Robert F. Wagner, Jr., Park, btw. Battery Place and New York Harbor. ✆ **212/267-9700.** www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1 to Rector St. or South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green. *World Financial Center Plaza,* due east of the North Cove Yacht Harbor. ✆ **212/528-2733.** www.worldfinancialcenter.com. Subway: E to World Trade Center; R/W to Cortlandt St. *Rockefeller Park,* at the west end of Chambers and Warren sts. ✆ **212/528-2733.** www.batteryparkcity.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.

Bryant Park FREE Every year, Bryant Park seems to pack its live music schedule a little tighter. There's a big range of genres, and the park's central location makes it a convenient place to catch some sounds. Broadway's brightest croon for your lunchtime pleasure on select summer Thursdays (p. 66), while the Good Morning America Summer Concert Series (p. 86) brings out beats at 7am. On a less-elaborate note, you can also hear pianists every weekday in summer. The songs are old-timey, popularized by the likes of Fats Waller, Scott Joplin, and the Gershwins. Piano in the Park can be heard Mondays and Fridays from noon to 1:45pm. Check the website also for the "at 5" series, with singer-songwriters and jazz bands playing for an hour or two on midweek evenings.

Bryant Park, btw. W. 40th and 42nd sts., along Sixth Ave. ✆ 212/768-4242. www.bryantpark.org. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

Castle Clinton FREE This old defensive battery took a turn as a fashionable concert hall in the first half of the 1800s, and it recalls those former duties on Thursday nights in summer. Indie favorites like the Magnetic Fields, Calexico, and Del McCoury have done the honors in the past. The series kicks off with a July 4th show in Battery Park (p. 23). All shows are free, although you need to pick up tickets in advance. Distribution begins at Castle Clinton at 5pm on the day of the show, although people start lining up a good couple of hours before.

Battery Park, on the west side, at New York Harbor. ✆ 212/566-6700. www.downtownny.com. Subway: 1 to South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

Celebrate Brooklyn! The Prospect Park Bandshell is a perfect place for a concert, with a festive and friendly crowd. The audio selections are as eclectic as Brooklyn, with acts like Rufus Wainwright, the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Shows are generally well attended, so show up early if you want a decent view. Check the website for schedules. A $3 donation is suggested, with a couple of pricey benefit shows thrown in.

The Prospect Park Bandshell, Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/855-7882. www.celebratebrooklyn.org. Subway: F to Seventh Ave.; B/Q to Seventh Ave.; 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza. Enter at Prospect Park West and 9th St.

City Parks Foundation FREE This group is a major player in New York's free music scene, putting on some 1,100 performances every year. Shows take place in parks across the boroughs; check online to see what's playing and when. One event to keep an eye out for is late

August's **Charlie Parker Jazz Festival.** Bird gets honored with shows in two of his home neighborhoods, Harlem and the East Village. The Harlem show is Saturday afternoon in Marcus Garvey Park. Tompkins Square Park takes over on Sunday.

Marcus Garvey Park, 18 Mount Morris Park West, at Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/860-1373.** www.cityparksfoundation.org. Subway: 2/3 or 4/5/6 to 125th St. *Tompkins Sq.*, btw. 7th and 10th sts. and aves. A and B. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; F/V to Second Ave.

Citysol FREE There's a little bit of a bait and switch here: Solar One puts on a big weekend of free music, comedy, and installation art in an attempt to capture your attention for some hard facts about renewable energy. With the perils facing our planet, it's a highly benign Trojan Horse, and the lineup of entertainment is impressive. The show starts Thursday night, with Friday night comedy, Saturday afternoon music, and Sunday afternoon set aside for games and energy workshops. Oh, plus free beer—bring your electric bill and switch over to green power and they'll let you swill away to your liver's content. Usually the last weekend in June.

Stuyvesant Cove Park, 23rd St. and the FDR. ✆ **212/505-6050.** www.citysol.org. Subway 6 to 23rd St.; L to First Ave.

Crotona Park Jams FREE Revisiting epic Boogie Down park jams of the '70s, this series celebrates hip-hop culture. A surfeit of spinning DJs, often legends like GrandWizzard Theodore and Kool DJ AJ Scratch, set the tempo. The party is hosted by Tools of War and runs from 6 to 9pm on Thursday nights in July.

Crotona Park E. and Charlotte St. ✆ **718/378-2061.** www.myspace.com/toolsofwar. Subway: 2/5 to 174th St. Walk south on Boston Rd. to Suburban Place, take a right on Crotona Park E. and then a left onto Charlotte St., where you'll see Indian Lake and the jam.

East River Park Amphitheater FREE This newly renovated spot on the East River, with beautiful Brooklyn and bridge views, hosts free music programs on summer Saturdays. Ted Leo and Cat Power played here in the past, but recent years have seen lower-profile performers. The amphitheater's capacity is around 1,000 and these shows aren't particularly well publicized, so you'll be able to wander in late and still snag a seat.

600 Grand St., at the East River. No phone. www.ermp.org. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St. Walk along the south side of the Williamsburg Bridge and take the pedestrian bridge over the FDR. Turn left and follow the river down to the amphitheater.

High Culture for Free

Met in the Parks FREE Critics may sniff that the Metropolitan Opera rests on its laurels, but this institution maintains extremely high standards. Tickets can soar near $400 for shows at the Opera House, but for 2 weeks every summer the fat lady sings for free. Shows are held in parks in all five boroughs, with a couple of Jersey visits thrown in as well. Two different operas are performed, usually eight performances in all. Check the website for exact locations and times; no tickets are required. ✆ **212/362-6000.** www.metoperafamily.org.

New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks FREE The New York Philharmonic, one of the world's premier symphonies, gives away some seven shows every summer. The covered composers range from Sibelius to Strauss to Ives. While the atmosphere is more hackey sack than Harnancourt—background for a group picnic rather than an event for the serious music lover—the performances by guest conductors and musicians are often inspired. If the classical music doesn't lure you in, you might stop by just for the free fireworks show afterwards. Performance locations vary, but generally all five boroughs and Long Island are included. Check www.newyorkphilharmonic.org for exact locations. Shows start at 8pm, no tickets required. ✆ **212/875-5709.**

The classic summer Met and Phil shows are performed on the **Great Lawn in Central Park** (midpark, just below 86th St.; Subway: B/C or 4/5/6 to 86th St.). There are two different programs for each institution each year, and they're wildly popular, with the picnic blankets spread out hours before the music begins. The leafy setting is ideal, but if you want a closer view and a shorter waiting time, I recommend the less-crowded shows in Queens and the Bronx.

Governors Island FREE Our over-technical age seems to be breeding some analogue craving, which might account for folk music's resurgence. The Folks on the Island series brings surprisingly big names out to Governors Island, with Odetta, Richie Havens, and Slaid Cleaves putting on memorable recent shows. The concert site,

on a verdant lawn, is perfect for blanket-spreading and picnicking. Shows are at 1:30pm on Saturdays in July and early August. After that, the island's eyes look globally, with In the Pocket: New World Music, a series sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Vibrant Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban sounds fill the air on post-folk August Saturdays at 1pm. (As an added bonus, you'll get free passes to S.O.B.'s for the after party.)

Governors Island, ferries depart from Battery Maritime Building, 10 South St., btw. Broad and Whitehall sts., see p. 255 for more info. *Folks on the Island,* ✆ 212/602-0768. www.folksontheisland.com. ***In the Pocket: New World Music,* ✆ 212/219-9401,** ext. 118. www.lmcc.net/inthepocket. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 1 to South Ferry.

Harlem Meer Performance Festival FREE Latino and African sounds predominate at this meer-front festival. The scene is as upbeat as the music, which is usually very danceable. Blankets and picnics are encouraged. Concerts are Sunday afternoons from 4 to 6pm, Memorial Day weekend through late August, near the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center. The same site also hosts "Dancing on the Plaza," on Thursday evenings in summer. There are lessons from 6 to 6:45pm, and then live music until 8:30pm. Disco and soul are among the offerings.

Central Park, at 110th St., btw. Fifth and Lenox aves. ✆ 212/860-1370. www.centralparknyc.org. Subway: 2/3 to Central Park N.

Lincoln Center Out of Doors FREE Lincoln Center is a veritable city of performing arts, and every summer for over 30 years now, the great public square has been home to a diverse series of shows. The breadth is breathtaking, from Chinese opera to Greek dance to cutting-edge jazz to children's story time. Incredibly, it's all free. Check online for exact schedules, covering 2½ weeks in August. ***Note:*** Look for several shows that take place in the nearby Damrosch Park Bandshell, at West 62nd Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, at Broadway and 64th St. ✆ 212/546-2656. www.lincolncenter.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Madison Square Music FREE Madison Square's refurbished park has joined the summer music scrum, with the Oval Lawn Series on Wednesday nights. (A second series in the fall runs on Sat afternoons.) Radio thrift shop proprietress Laura Cantrell and jazz axeman Charlie Hunter have been heard here, although the performers are generally

not household names. Taste buds more than cochleae are what make this concert special, however. The legendary Shake Shack (✆ **212/889-6600;** www.shakeshacknyc.com), with its $3.50 burgers, makes for the perfect accompanying picnic. (***Note:*** If you're planning on eating from the Shake Shack, allow an extra 8–10 hr. to get through the line, which in nice weather stretches to Brooklyn.)

Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. ✆ 212/538-4071. www.madisonsquarepark.org. Jun–Aug Wed 7pm. Subway: N/R/W or 6 to 23rd St.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Concert Series **FREE** Jazz, soul, gospel, and old school (MC Hammer!) are some of the genres that can be heard on the Monday night program here. Seating is limited, so you might want to bring your own chair. In case of rain, concerts are postponed to Tuesday. Shows start at 7:30pm.

Wingate Field, Winthrop St., btw. Brooklyn and Kingston aves., Brooklyn. ✆ 718/469-1912. www.brooklynconcerts.com. Subway: 2/5 to Winthrop St.

Music in the Square **FREE** Union Square invites you to stop by with a blanket and a picnic to accompany this series of concerts. Shows are usually Thursday after work (5:30pm start times) in the South Plaza. Jazz, indie bands, and world music nights provide a diversity of beats.

Union Sq. ✆ 212/460-1200. www.unionsquarenyc.org. Jun–Aug Thurs. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Naumburg Orchestral Concerts **FREE** The Naumburg Bandshell in Central Park hosts this short concert series, which varies from classical orchestral presentations to brass to flamenco. The series is one of the oldest in the country, with over a century's worth of experience in entertaining New Yorkers. Shows are on four Tuesday nights at 7:30pm, with no rain dates.

Midpark, Central Park, just below 72nd St. ✆ 718/340-3018. www.naumburgconcerts.org. Subway: B/C to 72nd St.; 6 to 68th St./Hunter College.

Riverside Clay Tennis Association Sunset Concert Series **FREE** Perhaps the least wait ever to get on a tennis court in New York City. Blankets and picnic baskets are encouraged at this Riverside Park shindig, as accompaniment for live jazz, classical, samba, and bluegrass. The setting is lovely, and you can hang around afterwards to enjoy the summer night air. Shows are Saturdays from 7 to 9pm, with rain dates set for the same time on Sunday.

Riverside Park, the Hudson at 97th St. ✆ **212/870-3078.** www.rcta.info. Subway: 1/2/3 to 96th St.

RiverRocks FREE I love the festive atmosphere of this concert series. The crowd is friendly, and sunset over the Hudson and the Jersey skyline is inspiring. Roomy Pier 54 does the hosting. If you show up late you won't get very close to the band, but you will find plenty of space for hanging out, or even dancing. Music varies, from up-and-comers, to groups in slow decline. Check the website for times and dates, and also check for Tuesday and Friday night shows on nearby Pier 45.

Pier 54 on the Hudson, at 14th St. ✆ **212/533-PARK** [7275]. www.hudsonriverpark.org. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Seaport Music Festival FREE The South Street Seaport isn't much more than a glorified mall, which is cause enough for most locals to give it a wide berth. In the summer, however, Pier 17 is loaded with great free music. Booking is excellent and selections are diverse, from salsa to zydeco, with memorable recent visits from Animal Collective, Dave Alvin, and Jay Farrar. Events are usually held on Friday nights. The festival runs late June through August.

Pier 17, btw. Beekman and Fulton sts., just east of South St. ✆ **212/SEAPORT** [732-7678]. www.seaportmusicfestival.com. Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Seaside Summer Concert Series FREE This free series attracts Coney Island locals, who settle into Asser Levy Park for convivial evenings. The booking for this event is borderline scary, with Michael Bolton, Liza Minnelli, and Air Supply playing in recent years. (The B-52's in '07 helped balance things out.) Concerts begin at 7:30pm on Thursday nights from mid-July to mid-August.

W. 5th St. and Surf Ave., Coney Island, across from the aquarium. ✆ **718/469-1912.** www.brooklynconcerts.com. Subway: F/Q to W. 8th St./NY Aquarium.

Siren Music Festival FREE The best in below-the-radar rock can be found at the *Village Voice*'s annual Siren Music Festival. Over a hundred thousand fans assemble near the Coney Island boardwalk for music on two stages. The bands tend to be high-quality performers, on the cusp of breakthroughs, or not too far removed from indie-rock triumphs. See p. 295 for more information.

Main stage, 10th St., at the boardwalk. *Second stage,* Stillwell Ave., at the boardwalk. ✆ **212/475-3333.** www.villagevoice.com/siren. Saturday in mid-July 1–9pm. Subway: D/F/Q/W to Stillwell Ave./Coney Island.

SummerGarden FREE The MoMA's half-jazz, half-classical soul is on display during this summer concert series. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden plays host, so if your mind wanders from the music you have Philip Johnson's elegant layout to enjoy. Juilliard students handle the classical side, while Lincoln Center is on point for the jazz. The garden gates on 54th between Fifth and Sixth avenues open at 7pm, but seating is limited, so show up earlier if you don't want to stand. In case of rain, the concerts move indoors to the Agnes Gund Garden Lobby.

11 W. 53rd St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/708-9400. www.moma.org. July–Aug Sun 8pm. Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave.

Summer Nights at El Museo del Barrio FREE Latin flavors are on the bill on summer Thursdays at this Harlem institution. Shows are performed inside the historic Teatro Heckscher, with music ranging from Cuban son to modern Latino rock. Select Thursday nights from 6:30 to 9pm, June to August.

1230 Fifth Ave., at 104th St. ✆ 212/831-7272. www.elmuseo.org. Subway: 6 to 103rd St.

SummerStage FREE Words like summer and music and free conjure an idyllic picture, especially in the context of Central Park. SummerStage is a crack outfit that brings big-name performers to a stage just off the Rumsey Playfield. To get a seat in the bleachers, better show up a couple of hours before start time. If you're not that patient, you can just wander in at any time, and you should be able to find a spot to stand and/or dance. Since no tickets are required, it's easy to come and go freely unless it's a super popular show. Acts as varied as James Brown, Sonic Youth, and Hugh Masekela have taken the stage, and recent years have seen readings and comedy added to the mix. On the downside, every summer it seems more and more of the concerts are pricey benefit shows, with tickets going for $40 to $60. To further support the series, donations are solicited as you enter. (No contribution is required.)

Central Park, at the Rumsey Playfield, near E. 72nd St. ✆ 212/360-2777 or 212/360-2756. www.summerstage.org. Subway: 6 to 68th or 77th sts.; B/C to 72nd St.

Wall Street Rising FREE Summer's last shows come courtesy of the Music Downtown series. Sponsored by Financial District boosters, the site is the lovely plaza of 7 World Trade Center, the first phoenix to rise from 9/11's ashes. Victoria Williams and M. Ward and

Nick Lowe did recent honors. Shows are free and start at 5:30pm, rain or shine, over Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights in mid-September.

7 World Trade Center Plaza, Greenwich and Barclay sts. ✆ 212/509-0300. www.musicdowntown.com. Subway: E to World Trade Center, 2/3 to Park Place, 4/5 to Fulton St., R/W to Cortlandt St.

Washington Square Music Festival FREE One of the city's oldest festivals brings classical music (and a little jazz and folk) to the heart of the Village. Three pieces, connected by an overall theme, are played Tuesday nights in July and early August from 8 to 10pm. The last Tuesday of the month is often set aside for jazz, salsa, or swing, and there's usually a bonus Saturday concert in late June. The festival is held in the southeast corner of Washington Square Park. Limited seating is available. In case of rain, concerts move to NYU's Frederick Loewe Theatre (35 W. 4th St. at Greene St.).

Near the intersection of Washington Sq. S. and Washington Sq. E. ✆ 212/252-3621. www.washingtonsquaremusicfestival.org. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

2 The Reel Cheap World

The movies love New York. Blithely ignoring our existing congestion, productions flock to the city to steal our parking spaces and tie up our sidewalks. Gotham-themed films line the video store shelves. Is it because we're a convenient symbol of urban glamour? Or is it simply because New York is the greatest city in the history of the world? Either way, NYC has a lot of cinematic pride, which allows New Yorkers to be extorted with $12 movie tickets, a dearth of cheap afternoon matinees, and new releases sold out by 4pm even on gorgeous sunny days. Fortunately in New York there are always alternatives. Our libraries are stocked with videos, our bars screen in their backrooms, and in the summer we get spectacular film alfresco. Most events are on the house, and those that aren't won't break the bank.

INDIES, CULTS, CLASSICS & MORE

African Diaspora Ciné-Club FREE The "global Black experience" is the focus of this monthly screening. Films from as far afield as Rwanda, Haiti, and Chad make the cut, and help viewers expand their perspective beyond the paltry range of mainstream African and

African-American fare. The actual directors often make the post-flick Q&As, and refreshments are served. Screening locations at Teachers College vary, call ahead; films are shown the last Friday of every month at 6pm.

Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th St., btw. Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. ✆ 212/864-1760. www.nyadff.org. Subway: 1 to 116th St.; A/B/C/D to 125th St.

Cabaret Cinema Beneath the Rubin Museum of Art's sparkling new galleries is an intimate candlelit screening room. Friday evenings see projections of a terrific lineup of films. When the "Holy Madness" exhibit was up, the museum screened related reels that ranged from *Siddhartha* to *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Shows come with related commentary from a big-time introducer, like Wallace Shawn answering questions about *My Dinner with Andre*. The movies roll at 9:30pm. There's a $7 bar minimum (purchase a drink or snack upstairs and ask the bartender for a chit, which you'll trade for a free ticket at an adjacent table).

150 W. 17th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/620-5000. www.rmanyc.org. Subway: 1/2/3/F/L to 14th St.

Coney Island Museum On Saturday nights in summer, the museum drags its carny relics to the side and lays in rows of chairs so it can show off Coney Island's sideshow heritage, or at least movies made in the same spirit. Expect uplifting cinematic triumphs with the words "bikini" and/or "bandit" in the title. Low-budget productions beget budget prices: just $5. And the popcorn's free! Saturdays at 8:30pm. In late September, look out for the Coney Island Film Festival. Most programs are only $6 and run through a full weekend of shorts and features.

1208 Surf Ave., 2nd floor, near 12th St. ✆ 718/372-5159. www.indiefilmpage.com. Subway: D/F/N/Q to Coney Island/Stillwell Ave.

Manhattan Short Film Festival FREE As media over-saturation contracts our attention spans ever further, short films become increasingly useful. The Manhattan Short Film Festival brings little flicks from around the world to us every September. Though repeating the arc of beginnings, middles, and endings twelve times in a row can be tiresome, the quality of film here is very high, with the best of the festival represented. The screenings are free, as is the music that kicks off the show around 5pm. Location varies from year to year.

✆ 212/529-8640. www.msfilmfest.com.

Membership Has Its Privileges

Does Hollywood still make movies that aren't just flimsy remakes of second-rate television shows? Just when we're ready to give up forever on the medium, the marquee of the **Film Forum** draws us in with some irresistible nugget and we're hooked again. Three screens rotate between revivals, retrospectives, and indies that can't be found elsewhere. The crowd is just as interesting, with big-shot actors and directors often in the house, upping their avant-garde cinematic cred. A 1-year membership to Film Forum is one of the city's best steals. Seventy-five bucks buys you close to half-price movie tickets for all three screens 365¼ days a year. That's $5.50 instead of $10.50. The next membership level up is an even sweeter deal: $110 entitles you to *two* half-price tickets for every show. Imagine: cheap date opportunities every single day. Membership is good for 1 year from the date of purchase. But wait, there's more. It's also 100% tax deductible. Now if only they could make the seats a little more comfortable. 209 W. Houston St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Varick sts. ✆ **212/727-8110.** www.filmforum.com. Subway: 1 to Houston St.

The Maysles Cinema FREE Documentaries like *Gimme Shelter* and *Grey Gardens* forged the legend of brothers Albert and David Maysles. Although David has passed on, Albert continues to be an active force in the film world. His Harlem institute strives to make documentary film and video accessible to underserved populations. Films run several nights a week and sometimes come with moderated audience discussions. Suggested admission is only $7, with free events peppered through the schedule.

343 Malcolm X Blvd. (Lenox Blvd.), btw. 127th and 128th sts. ✆ **212/582-6050.** www.mayslesfilms.com. Subway: 2/3 to 125th St.

Rooftop Films Rooftops. Brooklyn's got 'em in spades. Rooftop Films has a lovely one on top of the American Can Factory. This sprawling industrial compound dates back at least as far as the Civil War. On summer nights, God dims the overheads, and indie shorts and features play. Despite screening low-budget productions, Rooftop

Current Releases for Little Currency

"That $3 theater" became "that $4 theater" and then closed altogether. The uptown bargain-matinee place got torn down to make way for million-dollar condos. It's becoming harder and harder to find a current release for anything less than the usurious $12 charged for prime-time viewing. If you're in the right neighborhood, though, there are still a couple of options left.

AMC MJ Harlem 9 Magic Johnson offers matinees at a discounted rate of $8.50 (matinees are Mon–Thurs before 6pm, holidays excepted, and Fri–Sun before 4pm). Save even more by waking up with the birds and attending a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday show before noon ($6). 2309 Frederick Douglass Blvd., at 124th St. ✆ **212/665-6923.** www.enjoytheshow.com. Subway: A/B/C/D to 125th St.

Cobble Hill Cinemas Monday through Friday all shows before 5pm are only $6, as are the first shows of the day on the weekend (as long as they start before 2pm). If matinees don't do it for you, there are also two bargain days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, when all seats for all shows all day and all night are a humble $6.50. The only exceptions are special engagements and holidays. 265 Court St., at Butler St., Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/596-9113.** www.cobblehilltheatre.com. Subway: F/G to Bergen St.

Kew Gardens Cinemas First-run films play here, usually more interesting indie fare, with several bargain showtimes. Tuesdays and Thursdays are $6.50 for all seats all day. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, all seats are $6.50 until 5pm, as are seats for the first show before 2pm on Saturdays and Sundays. Holidays and special engagements are excepted for the cheap seats. ✆ **718/441-9835.** www.kewgardenstheatre.com. 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., at Austin St., Kew Gardens, Queens. Subway: E/F to Kew Gardens/Union Turnpike.

UA Kaufman Astoria 14 Right across the street from the legendary Kaufman Astoria Studios, this Queens megaplex has bargain matinees. Every weekday show before 3pm is "only" $8, as is the first Saturday show before 3pm. 35-30 38th St., off Steinway, Astoria, Queens. ✆ **718/786-2020.** Subway: G/R/V to Steinway St.

Films does an incredible filtering job, and quality is surprisingly high. Film themes run along the lines of "Home Movies" or "Scenes from Texas." Screenings cost around $9, a bargain if you value films made by actual human beings and not Hollywood-studio automatons. Other venues, including the lawn at the Automotive High School in Williamsburg and indoors at the Chelsea Market, have recently been added. Check the website for exact ticket prices and times (several films are free), and look for free after-parties following many of the programs. Movies start after sunset (9pm usually), with free live music beforehand.

American Can Factory, 232 3rd St., Bldg. B, btw. Third and Fourth aves., Brooklyn. ✆ 718/417-7362. www.rooftopfilms.com. Subway: F/G to Carroll Gardens; N/R to Union St./Fourth Ave. When it rains, screenings are held indoors at the same location.

Sony Wonder Technology Lab FREE Sony goes to bat for high-def technology by hosting free films in its 73-seat theater. The flicks tend to be well-known Hollywood products of recent vintage. Sprinkled throughout the year are additional screenings for the kiddies. Adults get select Saturdays at 2pm, the kids get select Thursdays at 2pm and Saturdays at noon. Reservations recommended; call on Monday morning when a screening is scheduled for later in the week.

550 Madison Ave., at 56th St. ✆ 212/833-7858. www.sonywondertechlab.com. Subway: 4/5/6 to 59th St.; N/R/W to Lexington Ave./59th St.

Thursdays at Chelsea Chelsea's Clearview 9 Cinema keeps the natives from getting too restless over a diet of mainstream Hollywood fare by hosting this popular weekly reduced-rate night. Drag darling Hedda Lettuce warms up the room before camp classics get projected. Expect Joan Crawford and Bette Davis to be comprehensively represented. Thursdays at 7pm and 9:30pm; only $6.50.

260 W. 23rd St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ 212/777-FILM [3456]. www.clearviewcinemas.com. Subway: 1 or C/E to 23rd St.

NYC'S DRIVE-IN: OUTDOOR SUMMER SCREENINGS

We may be too cheap for insurance, garages, tickets, tolls, and all the other joys of car ownership, but New Yorkers do know how to enjoy their very own brand of drive-in movie. Come summer, the parks roll out the big screens and the locals trundle in with blankets and picnic

Free Outdoor Summer Movies

Note: **All movies begin at dusk.**

Monday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
HBO Bryant Park Summer Film Festival	Crotona Park Hip Hop Film Festival	Brooklyn Bridge Movies With a View	RiverFlicks-Pier 25
	Outdoor Cinema Program at Socrates Sculpture Park		
	Summer on the Hudson: Movies Under the Stars		
	RiverFlicks-Pier 54		

dinners. Each festival has its own identity, with movies ranging across the decades and the genres, assuring something for every cineaste's taste. As dusk settles over the city, around 8 or 8:30pm, the crowd hushes and the reels spin. Lie back and be transported by the magic of the movies under the starry skies. Well, skies.

Central Park Film Festival FREE Central Park has been lending atmosphere to films since 1908 (a silent version of *Romeo and Juliet* was the first movie shot here). The Park celebrates its long starring career with this late-summer fest, which screens several of the more than 200 movies that have had major scenes here. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Tootsie* are among past players. Admission is free, at the Rumsey Playfield, usually over 5 nights (Tues–Sat) leading into the Labor Day weekend. Gates open at 6pm, screenings at 8.

Central Park, at the Rumsey Playfield, near E. 72nd St. ✆ 212/310-6600. www.centralparknyc.org. Subway: 6 to 68th or 77th sts.; B/C to 72nd St.

Habana Outpost FREE This Fort Greene restaurant is the city's first "eco-eatery," a restaurant dedicated to earth-friendly practices. Its converted–parking lot location couldn't be more laid-back, with a menu of moderately priced Cuban and Mexican food. On Sunday nights in summer, free movies like camp classic *The Last Dragon* play outdoors at 8pm. There's no charge or minimum.

757 Fulton St., at S. Portland St., Fort Greene, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/858-9500. www.ecoeatery.com. Subway: C to Lafayette St.; G to Fulton St.

HBO Bryant Park Summer Film Festival FREE Bryant Park is the most famous and most popular of New York's outdoor talkies. A huge

The New Committee: The *Voice*'s Ticket Giveaways

Before the Internet ruled our lives, the ***Village Voice*** sponsored weekly movie ticket giveaways. You'd queue up somewhere near the NYU campus with a great crowd of fellow-scroungers known as "the Committee." Anything the city offered up for free would attract them. If you showed up early enough at the location, you'd be guaranteed a ticket for you and a guest. With the Internet's ascendance, however, promoters have a more direct way of getting your butts in the seats. Scroll down the left side of the *Voice*'s homepage (www.villagevoice.com) and you'll see a selection of promotional giveaways that almost always includes a movie premiere or two. ***Time Out New York*** (www.timeoutny.com) has contests and giveaways, too, though usually it's for theater, and they only offer a couple of seats, making for some long odds. Click on the *TONY* Free Flix box to see what's going on. With these new lottery systems, they'll get your name, address, e-mail, and other invasive disclosures, which the old Committee members wouldn't have given up for anything less than a T-shirt. Oh well—at least it's still free.

screen goes up along Sixth Avenue across from the library's back porch, and the lawn fills with friendly movie fanatics. Film selections run from kitsch like *Jailhouse Rock* to classics like *The Philadelphia Story* to tripped-out wonders like *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Watching the latter from the grass brings a creepy resonance considering Bryant Park was once a potter's field. The gates open for blanket spreading at 5pm, and if you want a decent view you should be on-site by then. Bring a crossword puzzle and a picnic dinner and pretend you're just sitting in the park and not waiting for a show. Latecomers have to watch from way back or the wings. It's not untenable; it's just not as much fun as dancing through the HBO trailer from the heart of the crowd. If you time things right, and the director's done his work, this event is totally worth its logistical impositions. Monday nights June through August.

W. 40th to 41st, on the Sixth Ave. side of Bryant Park. ✆ 212/512-5700. www.bryantpark.org. No rain dates. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

Movies With a View FREE What could be better than the spectacular sight of downtown lights shimmering behind the Gothic span of the Brooklyn Bridge? A free movie flickering in front, that's what. Every summer, Brooklyn Bridge Park, a DUMBO oasis on the former site of the Fulton Ferry Landing, shows a series of flicks. This program was once the anti–Bryant Park, with limited attendance, but like its hosting borough it has blown up in recent years and you should show up early if you want a decent spot. Special bonuses include free valet bike parking, DJs at 6pm, and shorts projected before each feature. Thursday nights at dusk, in July and August.

Empire–Fulton Ferry Park, just west of Water St. ✆ 718/802-0603. www.brooklynbridgepark.org. Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.; Water Taxi to Fulton Ferry Landing.

Outdoor Cinema Program at Socrates Sculpture Park FREE Queens is the most culturally diverse spot on the planet, so it makes sense that a Queens film festival would show off movies from around the world. You'll even find culture-appropriate food vendors, so you can eat Italian during *The Bicycle Thief* or Indian while *Monsoon Wedding* plays. The movies flicker at Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City, a former dump site resuscitated as an artistic oasis along the East River. There are great skyline sightlines, along with slightly less uplifting Costco parking lot views. Music, dancing, and food at 7pm, movies at dusk. Wednesday nights in July and August.

32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway, Astoria, Queens. ✆ 718/784-4520. www.socratessculpturepark.org. Subway: N/W to Broadway. Walk 8 blocks along Broadway toward the East River.

Prospect Park Film Series Celebrate Brooklyn! FREE Celebrate Brooklyn! earns superfluous exclamation points with an amazing program of music and film. At times the two are combined, like recent showings of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon!* with a live performance from the Jazz Passengers, or Yo La Tengo improvising the soundtrack to trippy underwater nature films. The series runs from June to August; check the website for exact dates. A $3 donation is suggested.

The Prospect Park Bandshell, enter at Prospect Park W. and 9th St. Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/855-7882. www.celebratebrooklyn.org. Subway: F to Seventh Ave.; B/Q to Seventh Ave.; 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza.

RiverFlicks FREE The waters of the Hudson and the Jersey skyline provide the backdrop for RiverFlicks. It's a viewer-friendly scene, with chairs laid out on the pier, free popcorn, and themed films that tend toward crowd-pleasing recent hits. *Legally Blonde, 8 Mile,* and *Gladiator* have all made the cut. This is not actually one of my favorites, as the spot is loud, and over-bright lighting makes the screen hard to scan. On the plus side, as a result there are usually seats left over (if not there's blanket-spreading space in back and on the wings). Pier 54 hosts Wednesday nights for adults, and Pier 46 takes Fridays for kids, in July and August.

Pier 46, at Charles St. and the Hudson. ✆ **212/533-7275.** www.hudsonriverpark.org. Subway: 1 to Christopher St. Walk toward the river. *Pier 54*, at 14th St. and the Hudson. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St., L to Eighth Ave. Walk toward the river.

Solar-Powered Film Festival FREE Solar One is New York's first free-standing building to get all of its power not from recycled dinosaurs, but from Helios himself. Every summer to celebrate this achievement (and to raise awareness about the inevitable need to live greener in NYC), the building hosts a film festival. Over two August weekends, projectors running on sun power alone project six well-chosen films, usually hipster fare like *Grey Gardens* and *Screen Door Jesus*. Look also for the dance series, with stage lights that run on solar power.

Stuyvesant Cove Park, 23rd St. and the FDR. ✆ **212/505-6050.** www.solar1.org. Subway 6 to 23rd St.; L to First Ave.

Summer on the Hudson: Movies Under the Stars FREE With Trump residential structures inflating into place seemingly overnight, lower Riverside Park is sure to have a higher profile with a few thousand newly minted West Siders. For their—and our—entertainment, the park's brand-new acreage is opening itself up to culture. In addition to acoustic music Sundays and other concerts, there's a thus-far underrated movie series at 8:30pm on summer Wednesdays. Curating is thematic, with titles like "On the Hudson River Waterfront" and "The Great Outdoors." Picnics encouraged, at the end of Pier I.

Pier I, the Hudson at 70th St. ✆ **212/408-0219.** www.nycgovparks.org. Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.

Tribeca Drive-In FREE The North Cove plaza of the World Financial Center shows off the big-budget capabilities of the Tribeca Film Festival. A huge screen and sweet sound make the most of crowd

For Real Culture Vultures

Our allies across the globe maintain cultural outposts throughout the city. With the support of universities and embassies, these organizations are able to offer a swath of free readings, lectures, and films. Though the material can be esoteric if you're not from the nation in question, pick the right events and you'll find plenty of accessible entertainment.

Austrian Cultural Forum FREE See *Donau, Dunak, Duna, Dunav, Dunarea* along with the rest of your favorite new Austrian flicks. Generally two showings, 6 and 8pm, with the day of the week varying. Admission is free; no reservations necessary. 11 E. 52nd St., btw. Fifth and Madison aves. ✆ **212/319-5300.** www.acfny.org. Subway: E/V to 53rd St.

Czech Center FREE The only Czech center outside of Europe, our Czech mates offer sporadic free films. Check the Czech Center schedule. Look also for art exhibits in this space. 1109 Madison Ave., at 83rd St. ✆ **212/288-0830.** www.czechcenter.com. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.

Deutsches Haus FREE This NYU-related institution bridges old and new worlds with screenings of German-language films. Check the website for a calendar of events. 42 Washington Mews, btw. Fifth Ave. and University Place. ✆ **212/998-8660.** www.deutscheshaus.as.nyu.edu. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place.

French Institute Fans of freedom flicks (French film) enjoy screenings of contemporaries and classics every Tuesday at the Florence Gould Hall. English subtitles come at no additional charge. Other film nights can be found scattered throughout the schedule, as can a series of free dance conversations put on by the Joyce Theater. 55 E. 59th St., btw. Madison and Park aves. ✆ **212/355-6160.** www.fiaf.org. Regular tickets are $10, but admission is free to French Institute members. Membership costs $90 per year and is tax deductible. Subway: N/R/W or 4/5/6 to 59th St.

pleasers like *Saturday Night Fever* and *Dirty Dancing,* with an accompanying party atmosphere. Late April; check the website for details; gates open at 6:30pm, screenings at 8.

Plaza, North Cove, btw. Vesey and Liberty sts. ✆ 212/941-2400. www.tribecafilmfestival.org. **Subway: 1/R/W to Rector St., E to World Trade Center., 4/5 to Fulton St., 2/3 to Park Place.**

SCREENINGS AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

New York's book repositories bear no hard feelings for the many indignities the movies have imposed over the years. Our libraries are so forgiving, in fact, that a few branches offer free film screenings. Check the NYPL website (**www.nypl.org**) for showings. The offerings are all over the map, from classics to avant-garde to recent Hollywood hits. There are even a few adaptations mixed in.

In Manhattan

Epiphany FREE Films for adults, times vary. 228 E. 23rd St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/679-2645.** Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

58th Street Library FREE Films for adults, Fridays at 2pm. 127 E. 58th St., btw. Lexington and Park aves. ✆ **212/759-7358.** Subway: N/R/W or 4/5/6 to 59th St.

Jefferson Market Library FREE Films for kids ages 4 to 8 on Tuesdays at 3:30pm. 425

FREE Let's Go to the Videotape

New York's libraries have extensive video collections. They're like Blockbuster, only with less censorship and you don't have to pay for anything. The **Donnell Library Center** has some 3,000 popular movies, on top of 2,200 unpopular arty movies. Plus, if you still haven't gotten around to upgrading to DVD, they've got 8,500 16mm films. The collection is predominantly circulating. With the Center closed for construction until 2011, you'll find the flicks loaned out to neighboring libraries. For the reserve film and video library, head over to the **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** (p. 259). For documentary and world cinema video, the mid-Manhattan branch library is your destination, 455 Fifth Ave. at 40th St. (✆ **212/340-0863;** www.nypl.org). Subway: 7 to Fifth Ave.; 4/5/6/S to 42nd St./Grand Central; B/D/F/Q to 42nd St./Bryant Park.

Sixth Ave., at 10th St. ✆ **212/243-4334.** Subway: F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.; A/B/C/D/E to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Yorkville Branch FREE The Yorkville Film Festival features classic films for adults, generally every other Friday at 3pm. 222 E. 79th St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/744-5824.** Subway: 6 to 77th St.

In Brooklyn

Brooklyn Public Library FREE Film selections here often correspond to monthly themes. Screenings for adults are in the Dweck Center on Fridays at 6pm. Look also for silent film and Brooklyn docs, and shows for kids. Main branch, Grand Army Plaza. ✆ **718/230-2100.** www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org. Subway: 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza.

Mill Basin FREE Family movie night is held once a month, on Mondays. 2385 Ralph Ave., btw. Ave. N and 64th St. ✆ **718/241-3973.** Subway: 2/5 to Flatbush Ave., take the B47, B41, or B3 bus.

3 The Theatah

Just as models make their way to California for its surfeit of Beach Girl #4 roles, dramatic actors are drawn to New York City. They're not just waiting on our tables, either. In NYC you can find great performances on every level of theater, from big-time Broadway (with its $100-plus orchestra seats) to $10 Off-Broadway to raw productions in the basements of bars, performed for whatever can be garnered by passing the hat. Cost is not necessarily a barometer of quality. You can drop a few Jacksons to discover the cast of a Broadway blockbuster is just phoning it in, while across town some hungry young talent is drawing tears at a free production of Shakespeare. Other free productions are offered up by schools, institutions, and work-in-progress programs. If you need something more polished than that, try downtown, where dirt-cheap theaters will get you the dramatic goods for $10 or less.

FREE THEATER

Free Willie: Shakespeare Alfresco

The Earl of Oxford would probably be gratified to know that all these centuries later his little plays dominate the summer theater scene in the world's capital. Sure, the plays are published under the name of an actor from Stratford, but the passions and conflicts resound just as

FREE Rise of the House Ushers

If you have the ability to pass out Playbills, point to seats, and enunciate the phrase "enjoy the show," then you're qualified to see free plays. Many smaller theater companies save money on the cost of ushers by trading your sweat equity for a complimentary seat. Each house has a different set of rules, and the number of volunteers needed varies from one to eight per night. Popular productions can have a backlog of a few weeks. The best plan of attack is to find a play you want to see and call the front office to see what their deal is. It may take some tenacious dialing, but it'll be easily worth it when you settle back in your seat without a penny spent. The two venues listed below are just a starting point; dozens of stages in the city will let you usher your way to free entertainment.

New York Theatre Workshop This small downtown theater doesn't shy away from experimentation, including occasional hip-hop fare. Five ushers are used per show. Call ✆ **212/780-9037** during regular business hours to synch your schedule with theirs. FINE PRINT Beyond ushering, Sunday night tickets are discounted to $20. 79 E. 4th St., btw. Second Ave. and the Bowery. www.nytw.org. Subway: 6 to Astor Place.

Second Stage Theatre This organization specializes in giving contemporary playwrights second chances to find audiences. The new 296-seat theatre is nicely designed and a comfortable place to usher. Call to see when your available dates match their needs. 307 W. 43rd St., at Eighth Ave. ✆ **212/246-4422.** www.2st.com. Subway: A/C/E/7 to 42nd St./Port Authority.

the Earl wrote them. Troupes love to try their hand at the Bard, and free Shakespeare abounds in the Big Apple. Join your fellow mortals and enjoy the midsummer night dreams.

Hudson Warehouse FREE The neoclassical marble and granite Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument puts a dignified cap on a Riverside Park knoll. For five summers now, it's also served as the backdrop for a rival free-summer-Shakespeare troupe (in a rival park). The players of Hudson Warehouse put on shows in July and August at 6:30pm,

Sources

Fledgling shows that are having trouble filling seats often go trolling for audiences on craigslist. Check under "free" on **www.craigslist.org** and you might spy a free night of drama. A sharp eye can also reward a person with preview seats. Check ***Time Out*** and the ***Village Voice*** for advertisements of newly opening productions. In addition to specials on tickets for the first few weeks, sometimes you'll spot an offering for a preview. You'll get something halfway between a dress rehearsal and the final polished show, but it won't cost a cent.

Thursday through Sunday, with two works of the Bard represented each year. The setting is informal, but the actors work hard to be heard over the ambient sound of park and parkway.

Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, Riverside Park, 89th St. at Riverside Dr. ✆ **212/560-6579.** www.hudsonwarehouse.net. Subway: 1 to 86th St., 2/3 to 96th St.

Inwood Shakespeare Festival **FREE** Inwood Hill Park, with its Bald Eagles and huge natural forest, is as un-Manhattan as Manhattan gets. The verdant hills here are the backdrop for the Moose Hall Theatre Company's annual takes on the Bard. They also branch out to other classic material, like *The Three Musketeers* or *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* and even added some opera to the repertoire in '08. Shows are casual, with a tailgating feel, as local families kick back on blankets. Families also enjoy the annual children's concert. The plays run about a dozen times each, Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:30pm.

Inwood Hill Park Peninsula, Isham St. at Seaman Ave. ✆ **917/918-0394.** www.moosehallisf.org. Subway: A to 207th St.; 1 to 215th St.

Piper Theatre Productions **FREE** After a successful multi-year run of outdoor Shakespeare at Untermyer Park in Yonkers, this grassroots troupe has expanded into Brooklyn. J.J. Byrne Park, which hosts the Old Stone House of Gowanus, provides a lovely backdrop for a laid-back set of theatergoers. Although sound is an issue, the performers are a high-energy bunch, and the direction takes some interesting risks (last year's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was set in 19th-c. Coney Island). Shows are free (although contributions are accepted), mid- to late July.

J.J. Bryne Park, 3rd St. at Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/768-3195.** www.alltheworldsastage.org. Subway: F/M/R to 9th St./Fourth Ave.

Shakespeare in the Park FREE Shh! Top secret! No one else knows about this amazing cultural giveaway. Every summer a William Shakespeare play is performed in a gorgeous open-air theater in the center of enchanted Central Park. Just show up a couple of minutes before showtime and whisper the password "Birnam Wood." Oh, were it that easy. Some 90,000 people attend the Public Theater/Delacorte Theater's productions every summer, and it's the worst-kept free secret in the city. It takes a lot to justify an hours-long Soviet-style wait for a lousy two-ticket ration, but Joseph Papp's Public Theater rarely comes up short. Design, direction, and acting (often featuring A-list stars) are all world-class. The productions vary from faithful classical interpretations to avant-garde re-imaginings. In summer, 1,800-plus seats are given out at the Delacorte in Central Park and outside the Public Theater Downtown. The downtown location gives out fewer tickets, but the line is more under control. You'll need some determination for your free will, as people start lining up 2 or 3 hours early for the 1pm giveaways. For a hot show, you'll find bodies outside the Delacorte before 8am. In extreme cases—say Meryl Streep and Christopher Walken doing Chekhov—the line can start the night before. Just treat the ticket queue, with its natural camaraderie, as part of the experience. The outer boroughs also have their own ticket locations for selected performances, in addition to special arts education programs. Check the "Shakespeare in the Boroughs" page on the Public Theater website for more information. (And check to see if there's a reprise of '08's online ticket lottery.)

The season runs June through August and features one or two Shakespeare plays, and often a play that's completely unrelated to the Bard.

Public Theater, 425 Lafayette St., just below Astor Place. ✆ **212/539-8750.** www.publictheater.org. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St. *Delacorte Theater*, Belvedere Castle, near 79th St. and West Dr. ✆ **212/539-8750.** Subway: B/C to 81st St.

Shakespeare in the Park(ing) Lot FREE Central Park is classy and well groomed, with lush grass and trees softening the hard edges of the city. The municipal parking lot on Ludlow Street has none of these charms, but the graffiti-slathered asphalt patch can compete in the realm of Tudor drama. The troupe Drilling CompaNY puts on Shakespeare every summer, with a wealth of energy and wit to make up for the lack of big-name casts and big-budget backdrops. It's a

wonderfully surreal scene, with sword fights and intrigue in the foreground while befuddled neighbors cut through the parking spaces in back. Seating is first-come, first-served, or bring your own (padding is a must, as that pavement gets hard when you've been parked for a while). Two plays per summer over six weekends. FINE PRINT Parking is available, and it's very convenient.

Ludlow St., btw. Broome and Delancey sts. ✆ 212/877-0099. www.drillingcompany.org. July–Aug Thurs–Sat 8pm. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Shakespeare on the Hudson FREE Holla Holla Productions puts on the most casual of the summer Shakespeares, staking out ground on the Clinton Cove pier. Picnicking and general lawn sprawling are encouraged, with plays tending toward the accessible end of the spectrum, like recent stabs at *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*. Three September weekends do the hosting, with one matinee and one evening performance each on Saturday and Sunday.

Clinton Cove, 56th St. at the Hudson. ✆ 212/757-0981. www.fohrp.org. Subway: 1/A/B/C/D to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

More Alfresco Theater

Boomerang Theatre FREE Boomerang comes back each year with performances of Shakespearean plays in parks around New York. Riverside, Central, and Prospect have all served as stages, with shows starting at 2pm. Boomerang has also been known to give away a Eugene O'Neill performance or two. The website has show schedules and locations.

✆ 212/501-4069. www.boomerangtheatre.org.

Circus Amok FREE Amok rakes muck as it entertains, combining activist sentiments with traditional circus arts. Acrobats, jugglers, and a bearded woman are among the draws. The Circus Amok band often trolls through neighborhoods, gathering an audience for shows performed in local parks. Look for some two dozen shows spread out across the month of September.

✆ 718/486-7432, ext. 1. www.circusamok.org.

The Classical Theatre of Harlem FREE This decade-old troupe brings the classics to audiences that aren't exactly inundated with *The Cherry Orchard* or *Waiting for Godot*. They also stretch the definition of classic, as in '08's production of Melvin Van Peebles's musical *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death*. In late July and early August, there

are free outdoor performances spread across four parks. Naturally, Harlem hosts (at Marcus Garvey Park), as do amphitheaters in the Bronx and on the Lower East Side. No tickets or reservations necessary; shows mostly Friday and Saturday nights.

✆ **212/564-9983.** www.classicaltheatreofharlem.org. Locations vary; check the website.

New York Classical Theatre FREE NYCT takes advantage of the natural contours of Central Park to stage its summer Shakespeare productions. Plays begin around 103rd Street and Central Park West, but NYCT's innovation is Panoramic Theatre, which is careful not to cast performers' feet in cement. As scenes shift, the location does as well, furthering the sense of an unfolding story. A second Shakespearean series has recently been added downtown, with Battery Park and Castle Clinton as backdrops. When Shakespeare isn't on the bill, look for classic playwrights like Moliere or G. B. Shaw. Classical theater neophytes can take advantage of free pre-show workshops, in separate versions for kids and adults.

Central Park, ✆ **212/252-4531.** www.newyorkclassical.org. Usually 3 plays per summer; no tickets or reservations required. Check website for showtimes. June–Aug Thurs–Sun 7pm. Subway: B/C to 103rd St. *Battery Park*, Subway: 4/5 to Bowling Green; R/W to Whitehall; 1 to South Ferry.

Theatreworks USA FREE Every summer, this organization puts up a production aimed at rug-rat edification (or at least amusement). The group concentrates on one play per season, usually a modern musical. Tickets are distributed on the day of the performance, with four per person available 1 hour before curtain time. Shows run between one and three times a day, every day but Saturday. Summer camps usually reserve the bulk of weekday afternoon seats, so your best bet is an evening or Sunday show.

Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St., btw. Bleecker and Hudson sts. ✆ **212/332-0001.** www.theatreworksusa.org. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

Theater with Class

In the working and reworking of new plays, feedback devices are essential. An audience of warm bodies makes a great barometer for figuring out which scenes are killing and which lines are bombing. With so much untested drama in NYC, it's easy to find showcases, workshops, and readings that are eager for your presence. You'll often

FREE Tune In

Give our regards to theatrical greatest-hits packages. The casts of the Great White Way leave the confines of their stages to flog their shows in Midtown, usually in musical form. Huge stars wander down from nearby dressing rooms, making these very popular events. And you thought Times Square was crowded already.

Broadway in Bryant Park Every summer Broadway teases fans with a quick sampler on the Bryant Park stage. *Grey Gardens, Spring Awakening,* and *Xanadu* are among the headliners that perform excerpts for a crowded lawn. Shows are held during lunch hours (12:30–1:30pm) in July and early August. Behind the Public Library, btw. 40th and 42nd sts. and Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/768-4242.** www.bryantpark.org. Subway: F/B/D/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

Broadway on Broadway A special stage in Times Square hosts this massive concert on a Sunday in mid-September. At least a baker's dozen of shows make an appearance, including heavy hitters like *The Lion King, Avenue Q,* and *Mamma Mia!* For the finale, enough confetti rains down to give onlookers flashbacks to New Year's Eve. Times Square. ✆ **212/768-1560.** www.broadwayonbroadway.com. Usually around 11:30am. Subway: 1/2/3/7 or N/Q/R/S/W to Times Sq.

Broadway's Stars in the Alley On the Wednesday before the Tonys, Shubert Alley brings out representatives from some two dozen shows to prance about for your amusement. Though appearances are brief, wattage is high, with the likes of Leslie Uggams, Lynn Redgrave, and Harvey Fierstein. Shubert Alley, access from 45th St., just west of Seventh Ave. ✆ **212/764-1122.** www.starsinthealley.com. Usually 11am, early June. Subway: 1/2/3/7 or N/Q/R/S/W to Times Sq.

be sharing the room with a parcel of pros: agents, producers, and casting directors on the prowl for the next big things. If you don't mind putting up with some unsanded edges, it's a great way to catch a night of free theater.

Cap21 FREE The Collaborative Arts Project dedicates itself to fostering innovative productions. Part of the process involves developing new audiences, which are invited in for free programs on Monday nights. **The Dorothy Strelsin New Works Series** focuses on emerging artists, and the **Barbara Wolff Classics Series** reads through the likes of Sondheim or Rogers and Hammerstein.

18 W. 18th St., 6th floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/352-3101. www.cap21.org. Select Mon 7:30pm (check the website). Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

The Juilliard School FREE The fourth-year students of Juilliard's Drama Division mount full-scale productions to catch the eyes of agents, casting directors, and the press. The general public is invited in as well. Third-years also put on free shows, like a recent run through Shakespeare. FINE PRINT The free tickets go fast. You'll have to wait at the box office the first day they become available, although there's also a same-day standby line.

Broadway, at 65th St. ✆ 212/769-7406. www.juilliard.edu. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

The Martin E. Segal Theatre Center FREE This center is run by CUNY's PhD program in theatre, home to a talented crop of scholars, students, actors, and playwrights. The schedule is laden with freebies, including visits from international theatrical heavy-hitters, lecture series, and excerpted plays. In September, check out the Prelude festival (www.preludenyc.org), with nearly two dozen performances, readings, and open rehearsals of works in progress. No tickets or reservations are required.

365 Fifth Ave., btw. 34th and 35th sts. ✆ 212/917-1860. http://web.gc.cuny.edu/mestc. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.; 6 to 33rd St.

The Merc Reading Series and Workshops FREE Be present at the birth of a new play. This series, run by Urban Stages, combines professional actors with up-and-coming playwrights for gripping in-process read-throughs. You'll have the chance to Q&A with the playwright and score a glass of wine in the process. Mondays at 6pm at the Mercantile Library.

17 E. 47th St., btw. Madison and Fifth aves. ✆ 212/421-1380. www.urbanstages.org. Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; 6 to 51st St.

The New School for Drama FREE The New School integrates the arts of acting, directing, and playwriting. The fruits of these synergies can be found during two spring festivals. The Random Acts One-Act Play Festival presents thesis projects in the form of over 25 different shows. Those that weren't written in-house range from classics to contemporaries. The season runs February through April, Thursday through Saturday at 8pm, with a Saturday matinee at 3pm. Five plays are grouped together for each show. Shows are free, but it's best to reserve a seat in advance (✆ **212/279-4200**). Newly minted plays get treated to readings during the Final Draft series, which shows on a Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday in mid-May. Seven showcased works fill the bill, with professional direction to sweeten the plots. Again, free, but call ahead for a reservation (✆ **212/229-5859,** ext. 2628).

The New School for Drama Theater at the Westbeth, 151 Bank St., 3rd floor, btw. Washington St. and the West Side Hwy. www.newschool.edu/academic/drama. Subway: A/C/E/L to 14th St./Eighth Ave.; 1/2/3 to 14th St.

NYU Graduate Acting Program NYU's Tisch School of the Arts is justly famous for the high-profile directors, actors, and dramatic writers it has produced. You can get a glimpse of burgeoning talents at periodic free shows. Most are put on by second years (by third year they can get away with charging), in various theaters on and around the NYU campus. The tickets for charged shows tend to be reasonable, $12 or so. Free MFA Thesis readings for Tisch and the Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing are held in spring at the Public Theater (call ✆ **212/998-1985** for reservations).

Tisch Main Building, 721 Broadway, btw. Waverly and Washington places (just south of 8th St.). ✆ 212/998-1921. www.gradacting.tisch.nyu.edu. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.; A/B/C/D/E/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Rattlestick Playwrights Theater The Rattlestick targets upcoming playwrights and new plays. They nurture projects from creation and development all the way to production. For 2 weeks every spring they put on the **DirtyWorks Reading Series,** with new plays and works in progress. Performances are free, though they'd be delighted to have a $5 donation for readings and $10 for black-box productions. Check the website for other free readings and events during the rest of the year.

234 Waverly Place, just west of Seventh Ave., btw. Perry and W. 11th sts. ✆ 212/627-2556. www.rattlestick.org. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

2nd Monday Reading Series FREE Fortunately, the plays at Hudson Warehouse's readings feature more creativity than that suggested by the name. Emerging playwrights create the material, which is a mix of one-act and full-length plays. All readings are free; check online for times and locations.

✆ **212/560-6579.** www.hudsonwarehouse.net.

The York Theatre Company FREE Inside the tasteful modern confines of St. Peter's Church, the York Theatre trots out unsung new musicals for free performances. The **Developmental Reading Series** has warbled its way through Depression-era Chicago, *fin-de-siècle* Paris, and the present-day Smoky Mountains in recent years. FINE PRINT The shows are free but do sometimes "sell out," so reserve early.

619 Lexington Ave., at 54th St. ✆ **212/935-5824,** ext. 24. www.yorktheatre.org. Subway: E/V to Lexington Ave.; 6 to 51st St.

DIRT CHEAP THEATER

All About La Mama: Big Drama in Small Spaces

Small theater groups are notorious for their shoestring budgets, which means most don't have the luxury of permanent stages. All it takes to make a theater is some matte-black paint, a few gelled lights, and a bunch of folding chairs. Walk-up lofts in Midtown are constantly taking form as Off-Off-Broadway bastions. Downtown, especially the area around East 4th Street, is a locus with more staying power. Several companies work out of the area and most shows have East Village–friendly prices of $15 or less.

chashama FREE The innovative use of multiple spaces is a reinforcement of this arts group's name (it's Farsi for "to have vision"). Storefront windows in scattered locales host art exhibits, live music, and theatrical productions. There're also more permanent spaces, where the annual chashama Film Festival can be found. The storefront entertainment is free; films are only $5.

Various locales. ✆ **212/391-8151.** www.chashama.org.

Dixon Place Experimentation is the norm at Dixon Place, which bills itself as an "artistic lab with an audience." Since performances are in varied stages of evolution, ticket prices are on the low side, usually $5 to $15. On the first Wednesday of each month, enjoy the "7

People/7 Minutes" free open performance nights, where anyone is welcome and anything goes (for 7 min.) except stand-up comedy.

258 Bowery, 2nd floor, btw. Houston and Prince, but slated to move to a more permanent home at nearby 161 Chrystie St. ✆ **212/219-0736.** www.dixonplace.org. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Emerging Artists Theatre For over a dozen years, EAT has been nurturing new playwrights. New York debuts are frequent here, part of a collaborative process that involves company actors and associated directors. Although prices can approach Broadway levels, there are labs, and festivals, like the EAT Developmental Series, which is often just $10.

311 W. 43rd St., btw. Eighth and Ninth aves. ✆ **212/247-2429.** www.eatheatre.org. Subway: A/C/E to 42nd St./Port Authority.

Galapagos Art Space This Brooklyn bar began with a mini–Temple of Dendur moat in an old Williamsburg mayonnaise factory. A couple of expansions later, it's moved up to DUMBO, where it continues to bring in compelling comedy, theater, music, and film. Programming for the new space isn't set in stone yet, but keep an eye out for free burlesque on Mondays and free flicks Sunday night.

16 Main St., btw. Water and Plymouth sts., DUMBO, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/782-5188.** www.galapagosartspace.com. Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.

La Mama This venerable avatar of the avant-garde is fully established in the East Village, where it remains dedicated to artistic experimentation. Productions are high quality, and the ticket prices reflect it—shows can run from $5 to $30. One notable exception is the free **Experiments** readings series, performed in La Mama's club theatre space. Experiments features in-progress plays read with the writers in attendance, to provide instant-gratification feedback. Look also for the **Coffeehouse Chronicles,** a homecoming of sorts, which recalls the origins of the Off-Off-Broadway world with the original instigators. Those shows are free, although nostalgia is preserved with a passed hat. Check the website for exact days and times.

74 E. 4th St., btw. Second Ave. and the Bowery. ✆ **212/475-7710.** www.lamama.org. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

The Public Theater Shakespeare in the Park is only the beginning for the Public Theater, which churns out amazing theater all year long. From February to June, you can catch PUBLIC LAB, which puts on

bare-bones productions at a price friendly to threadbare budgets. Just $10 gets you into these still-evolving shows, presented by the LAByrinth Theater Company. Come July, look for the Summer Play Festival, with some eight different shows each for only $10.

425 Lafayette St., just below Astor Place. ✆ 212/539-8500. www.publictheater.org. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

The Slipper Room This Lower East Side bar hosts all manner of risqué business. Comedy and drama make the scene, but the best night is Saturday, when New York's longest-running burlesque holds court. **Mr. Choad's Upstairs/Downstairs** allows vaudeville acts and go-go girls to split time under the lights. FINE PRINT Note that the stage is at a slight declivity here, so if you want to be titillated by anything more than the neck up, arrive early.

167 Orchard St., at Stanton. ✆ 212/253-7246. www.slipperroom.com. Cover usually $5. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Spaghetti Dinner The **Great Small Works** artists collective is known for its puppetry and "toy theater" shows. Carrying the torch of an East Village tradition, they also host this quirky form of dinner theater. Audience members/diners are treated to performance of every stripe—from puppetry to dance to drama to film—along with a fine vegetarian spaghetti meal. Don't be surprised to find left-wing polemic in the mix as well. Tickets hover around $12, a price that wouldn't have seemed unreasonable when the series started in 1978. After a long run at P.S. 122, the show has gone on the road—call for info about locations and times.

Great Small Works. ✆ 718/840-2823. www.greatsmallworks.org.

Women's Project Theatre Women playwrights are the exclusive focus of the Women's Project. Reasonably priced shows can be found throughout the year, as well as the annual Corporate Carnival. Performed in the Winter Garden at the World Financial Center (p. 278), this corporate/circus mashup runs through some nine performances in mid-May, all of them free.

Julia Miles Theater, 424 W. 55th St., btw. Ninth and Tenth aves. ✆ 212/765-2105. www.womensproject.org. Subway: 1/A/B/C/D to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

The Tank This up-and-coming theater group lost its Midtown space to the wrecking ball and its replacement space downtown to bad plumbing. With a strong lineup of comedy, film, music, and theater,

NYC's Best Theater Discount Strategies

Academic Advantages If you've got an in with a library or a school, you may have an in for discount coupons through the **School Theater Ticket Program.** Librarians, teachers, students, and their families are all eligible. Musicals, Broadway on and off, and opera and ballet at Lincoln Center are among the offerings. Tickets are purchased directly from sponsoring theaters via the coupons. Check out the website, www.schooltix.com, for all the details. ✆ **212/354-4722.**

Evening Rush For those of the serendipitous bent, there are always last-minute rush ticket specials. Broadway, Off-Broadway, and even a few mega-hits set aside seats for students (sometimes seniors and regular folks are included, too). The seats are made available between 30 minutes and an hour before curtain. Make sure to bring plenty of ID. Another option is SRO seats—do not attempt if you're rocking your 5-inch spike heels. The seats for either program are usually $25 and up, which on the surface is no great bargain, but is actually pretty respectable when you consider that a full-price ticket would probably run three times as much. A great place for the rundown on the permutations of the individual theaters is www.talkinbroadway.com/boards.

For Teens: High 5 Tickets to the Arts High 5 doesn't shy away from the controversial notion that the children are our future. To uplift the level of cultural literacy of today's teens, High 5 makes a bushel of $5 theater and museum programs available. Adults can compartmentalize their jealousy, as mentors, parents, and friends also have the opportunity to cash in. They can accompany a teen for the same measly $5. Check the website for ticket details; Broadway tickets rarely appear here, but there's plenty of others to choose from, plus a listing of free and nearly free events. ✆ **212/HI5-TKTS** [445-8587]. www.highfivetix.org.

TDF Vouchers The Theatre Development Fund also brings us an Off-Off-Broadway equivalent to the TKTS booth. For $36 you get four vouchers that can be used for a host of shows, crossing the disciplines of drama, dance, and light opera. At $9 a pop, it's an affordable way to get into the cutting edge. ✆ **212/221-0885.** www.tdf.org.

TKTS TKTS has been dispensing same-day up-to-half-price seats for some 3 decades now. As far as bargains go, this is probably better for the tourists, who are more excited about spending "only" $40 to see some hoary musical. It's also worth remembering that the things they're selling tickets to are shows the producers are having trouble moving anyway. That said, the seats themselves tend to be good, and the selection is broad. At any given time, you can probably select from 25 different Broadway shows, and another 30 or so from Off-Broadway. TKTS is open from 3 to 8pm Monday through Saturday for evening performances, 10am to 2pm for Wednesday and Saturday matinees, and from 11am until 3pm for Sunday matinees, and then until a half-hour before the last curtain time on Sunday night. The booth has recently returned to a revamped Duffy Square in the heart of Times Square, 47th Street between Broadway and Seventh Avenue.

A second TKTS location can be found downtown at John and Front streets, near 199 Water Street in the South Street Seaport area. The lines are much shorter and matinee tickets are sold for the following day only, if you're the type that plans ahead (11am–6pm Mon–Sat; 11am–4:30pm Sun for Sun night performances only). Show availability is posted on a digital bulletin board that's updated as ticket supplies dwindle. Remember, TKTS accepts only cash or traveler's checks, no credit cards, no personal checks. Discounts are generally 50%, with a few shows at a 35% or 25% reduction. ✆ **212/221-0885.** www.tdf.org.

Other Discounts Several online sites will hook you up with discount codes for half-price tickets. Some require you to join to play, but the only tax they levy is the occasional piece of spam; otherwise, they're free. (And if you're not a spamphobe, you can get regular e-mail newsletters trumpeting the latest specials.) **Playbill Online** (www.playbill.com) has the best range of Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. **Best of Broadway** (✆ **212/398-8383;** www.bestofbroadway.com) has coupons and puts together group discount packages. The **Hit Show Club** (✆ **212/581-4211;** www.hitshowclub.com) is good for tourists. They have several packages that combine restaurants and attractions with well-known Broadway hits.

Theater at the Edge: Fringe NYC

In late August a chunk of the city goes on vacation and the **Fringe Festival** comes rushing in to maintain Gotham's equilibrium. This annual theatrical explosion brings hundreds of acts to downtown spaces. The troupes hail from around the world and range from the baldly amateurish to the highly polished. Tickets aren't super-cheap, but at $15 they're less than a trip to the Guggenheim or the MoMA. Free previews, with teasers of upcoming shows, are given on several afternoons at the Fringe's HQ, FringeCENTRAL. Less organized shows spill out onto the streets of downtown. We've seen actors project their lines over neighbors' repeated calls to "Shut the f**k up!" Whether appreciated by the full general public or not, the Fringe is a feast of theater, comedy, music, and performance art, and well worth a visit. ✆ **212/279-4488.** www.fringenyc.org. Various locations.

they'll land again on their feet. Though shows can run as high as $15, much of the calendar starts at $5. The Tank also hosts the **Bent** circuit-bending festival (www.bentfestival.org), dedicated to an art form that repurposes electronic toys into musical instruments. If you've ever wanted to hear a Speak & Spell employed as a jazz instrument, this is your fest. Performances take place over multiple dates, with tickets at $10, and free-beer happy hours nightly. Check the website for new locations and scheduling.

The Tank. ✆ **212/563-6269.** www.thetanknyc.org.

The Theater for the New City This alternative theater is known for giving breaks to unknown playwrights. Productions are consistently high quality, though ticket prices are usually only $15, with some shows as low as $5. The "New City, New Blood" reading series gives playwrights the opportunity to absorb audience feedback (readings are free or carry a $5 suggested donation). Over Memorial Day you can sample more dramatics for free during the Lower East Side Festival of the Arts. Theater is only the beginning, as spoken word, cabaret, film, video, and dance performances take over East 10th Street, between First and Second avenues. Events run until after midnight, and everything is

free. Also free is the Annual Summer Street Theater, which puts on operettas in a baker's dozen locations spread across five boroughs.

155 First Ave., btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **212/254-1109.** www.theaterforthenewcity.net. Subway: 6 to Astor Place, L to First Ave.

4 Let's Dance

The modern enforcement of cabaret regulations hit most New Yorkers by surprise. Laws regulating public dance had been on the books forever, but it had been many years since anyone had thought to enforce them. Innocuous tremors and inadvertent hip shakes were suddenly categorized as unlicensed dance expressions. Fortunately, dance in New York has never been limited to the clubs and bars. In the parks, on stages, and even in sanctuaries of the city, dance of all levels can be found, and often for free.

Baryshnikov Arts Center FREE Even people who can't tell the difference between a plié and a piqué know Mikhail Baryshnikov's name. His eponymous dance foundation advances collaboration among performers, choreographers, directors, and writers. Newly moved to the 37 ARTS space in Midtown, the BAC welcomes the public with free workshops, open lessons, and concerts. The Movado Hour, a monthly series of intimate chamber music performances that last exactly 60 minutes, is especially worth a listen. Most events require reservations; call 1 week ahead of the concert date for the Movado series.

450 W. 37th St., at Dyer Ave. ✆ **646/731-3200,** or 917/934-4966 for reservations. www.baryshnikovdancefoundation.org. Subway: A/C/E to Penn Station.

Dance Conversations FREE Choreographers present works in progress at this monthly program. Each evening presents four different choreographers. It's a discussion series as well, so expect jawing to following the dancing. Usually on the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Check the calendar online, as Dance Conversations sometimes flees to a different location.

Flea Theater, 41 White St., btw. Broadway and Church St. ✆ **212/226-0051.** www.theflea.org. Subway: 1 to Franklin St.

Dance Gotham: A Festival Usually running three nights in January at Symphony Space, this weekend revel presents a huge range of dance. Performances range from the polished to the rustic, with folk

dance, classical theatrics, and postmodern experiments all filling out the multi-performer bills. Regular tickets are only about $10, and last year they threw in Friday nights' performances for free.

Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. ✆ 212/928-6517. www.gothamarts.org. **Subway: 1/2/3 to 96th St.**

Dance Theater Workshop FREE The **Judson Memorial Church** has been an anchor of the West Village since 1890. The aging church has recently been renovated (a lovely new dance floor has been installed), and is again hosting the Dance Theater Workshop's popular Movement Research dance program. Dancers and choreographers vary from week to week, but the emphasis on pushing boundaries remains consistent. No reservations are taken. Mondays at 8pm; doors open at 7:45pm. Movement Research also puts on dance festivals that are chockablock with cheap and free performances, like a group ride to Staten Island, or a walk along Bushwick's abandoned railroad tracks. Also worth checking out is the Open Performance program at DTW's HQ. These shows are non-curated and open to all (sign up in advance), with a moderated discussion afterwards. Select Tuesdays at 7pm.

***Judson Church*, 55 Washington Sq. South, btw. Thompson and Sullivan sts. ✆ 212/539-2611.** www.movementresearch.org. **Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.** ***Open Performance*, 219 W. 19th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. Subway: 1 to 18th St.**

Dancing in the Streets FREE This arts organization brings site-specific performances to spots across the city. The integration of cityscape and moving bodies is a great way of seeing familiar spaces in a new way. Dances and demonstrations used to regularly visit Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, but the major show now is the **Hip Hop Generation Next** block party in Red Hook. Check the website for complete performance dates and locations.

Coffey Park, btw. Richards and Dwight sts., near Visitation Place, Red Hook, Brooklyn. ✆ 212/625-3505. www.dancinginthestreets.org. **Subway: F/G to Smith/9th St., then B77 bus to Dwight St. Other sites vary.**

Evening Stars FREE The **Joyce Theater** has been at the forefront of NYC's modern dance since 1982. Every September they help sponsor the best of American dance with free performances as part of downtown's River to River Festival. Programs pivot from the music of Sinatra to the Sugar Hill Gang to the Grateful Dead. Generally there

are evening shows at 7 or 7:30pm (Thurs–Sun) in a couple of spots around Battery Park. There's a large main stage, but if you want to be up close you can spread your blanket up to 2 hours earlier, when the park opens. (That blanket is all but obligatory, as no seating is provided, unless there's rain and the event is moved to the Stuyvesant High School Auditorium at Chambers and West sts.)

Co-sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Joyce Theater at Battery Park, on State St. at Pearl St. ✆ 212/219-9401, ext. 304. www.lmcc.net. Subway: 4/5 to Bowling Green; R/W to Whitehall; 1 to South Ferry.

MoonDance FREE July and August bring marvelous nights for this dance on Pier 54. Sunday evenings begin with a lesson at 6:30pm and cede to dancing a half-hour later, when you're a full-fledged expert. Dance varieties run from swing to salsa to R&B. Live music from crack bands enhances the lovely riverside setting.

Pier 54 on the Hudson, at 14th St. ✆ 212/533-PARK [7275]. www.hudsonriverpark.org. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

5 Sing, Sing: Karaoke

Maybe it's a side-effect of our new blog culture, but it seems the old gate-keeping editorial controls have fallen by the wayside. Local music is no exception, with a profusion of live-band karaoke nights allowing amateur lungs to step up to the mic and perform frontsperson duties. Join the caterwauling carousel and do your part to reaffirm the inherent dignity of the human race by drinking way too much tequila and then letting loose on a heartfelt version of "Feel Like Making Love." The traditional canned-music-and-bouncing-ball karaoke can also be found citywide. The venues below don't enforce drink minimums, and often karaoke nights are too crowded for anyone to notice if you're not tippling. Then again, doesn't sobriety kind of go against the very spirit of karaoke?

Arlene's Grocery FREE If you've ever wondered where the tristate has been hiding its best Ozzy and David Lee Roth imitators, you've been missing out on the live music karaoke at Arlene's Grocery. The house band has changed, but the emphasis on hard-rocking good times has not. The Monday night shows are as entertaining as before, filling 3 hours with the soul-uplifting sounds of '70s classic rock and '80s hair metal. If you do sign up and ascend the stage, you'll find the crowd enthusiastic, and nothing beats the thrill of belting out

"Black Dog" or "Paradise City" over an ass-kicking band. It's worth a visit just to check out the regulars. Many of them have come all the way from Jersey to show off how well they can work a club full of rabid fans with fingers spread in devil's horns. Best of all: There's no cover for these covers.

95 Stanton St., btw. Ludlow and Orchard sts. ✆ 212/358-1633. www.arlenesgrocery.net. Karaoke Mon 10pm–2am. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Googie's Lounge FREE Wednesday nights above the Living Room find Loser's Lounge keyboardist Joe McGinty tinkling the keys for the pleasure of your pipes. His website (www.joemcginty.typepad.com) delineates the song list, which hops from Boz Skaggs to Bette Midler, though there's usually a monthly thematic focus (say, the best of Abba). Special guests often join in. Shows start at 10:30pm, with a one-drink minimum per set.

154 Ludlow St., btw. Stanton and Rivington sts. ✆ 212/533-7235. www.livingroomny.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Hank's Saloon FREE The painted flames on Hank's wall identify the place as prime rockabilly territory. Live music plays most nights, with a little alt-country thrown in with the '50s stylings. It's all no cover, no minimum, and ordinary Joe's and Betty Jo's get the chance to lead the parade during Live Band Kuntry Karaoke, with Rob Ryan and the Brooklyn Country All-Stars. On Monday nights, let that tear in your beer inspire your best Johnny, Patsy, or Dolly. While you're at it, have some barbecue, on the house (p. 136). Show starts at 9pm.

46 Third Ave., at Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. ✆ 718/625-8003. www.exitfive.com/hankssaloon. Karaoke Monday at 9pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5/Q to Atlantic Ave.; M/N/R/W to Pacific St.

Iggy's FREE Drink specials help lubricate the slippery slope that leads to late-night karaoke cacophony at Iggy's. After a recent remodel, the bar is less karaoke-intensive, although you can still find the song machine fueling Monday-night mayhem. On Thursday night the illustratively named Arlene's World Famous Live Rock & Roll Karaoke Band (see Arlene's, above) takes the stage to maintain its global reputation.

1452 Second Ave., btw. 75th and 76th sts. ✆ 212/327-3043. www.iggysnewyork.com. Subway: 6 to 77th St.

O'Flanagan's FREE The Human Karaoke Experience boasts a playlist of over 500 songs, so it shouldn't be hard to find something in your range. Daughter of Brooklyn Pat Benatar (née Patricia Andrzejewski) has five songs represented, and there's a full complement of Beatles, Stones, and Elvii (both Presley and Costello). The hosting pub, O'Flanagan's on the Upper East Side, is congenial, if a little cookie-cutter.

1215 First Ave., btw. 65th and 66th sts. ✆ **212/439-0660.** www.newyorkplanet.net/humankaraoke. Two Thurs a month, 9pm–1:30am. Subway: F to 63rd St./Lexington Ave.; 6 to 68th St.

Second on Second FREE Early in the week (Sun–Wed), the private rooms in this low-lit Asian lounge come with low minimums. You can opt for 2 hours of drinks, apps, and tunes for $30 a head. In the main room the karaoke action starts up around 9pm, with some 30,000 songs figuratively stacked up for your warbling pleasure. A limited menu provides Thai and Japanese snacks, so you can show off those golden tonsils and enhance a stranger's dining experience at the same time.

27 Second Ave., at 2nd St. ✆ **212/473-2922.** www.2ndon2nd.com. Karaoke nightly. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Southpaw We all know the extraordinary levels of talent required to make it in the rap world (just look at Kid Rock), but that doesn't mean the unpolished among us can't entertain. "Hip Hop Karaoke" is quickly becoming a phenomenon, with packed shows letting little Biggies rhyme away for a forgiving crowd. (No one will think less of you if you're reading off a crib sheet.) Lately the shows have been hosted by BK's Southpaw; the cover is only $5 with flyer.

125 Fifth Ave., btw. Sterling and St. Johns sts. ✆ **718/230-0236.** www.hiphopkaraokenyc.com. Subway: 2/3 to Bergen St.; M/R to Union St.

Winnie's Hipsters and Chinatown locals just never have enough opportunity to chill together, which is where Winnie's comes in handy. The place is an ungentrifiable dive, but the savings get passed on to the crooning customer: It's only a buck a song to play along with the hit machine.

104 Bayard St. ✆ **212/732-2384.** Karaoke daily 8pm–4am. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

6 Humor Us: Comedy

There's no shortage of frustrating and surreal experiences in New York, ensuring plenty of fodder for the comedians in our midst. The city is currently stacked with young comic talent, which means amateur nights are more common than headliner-thick extravaganzas. Alas, amateur nights can also be express trips to the nether regions of stand-up hell. Somehow bad comedy is infinitely more painful than bad tragedy. I advise stepping carefully through the city's improv, open mic, and stand-up minefield. Fortunately, plenty of quick wits can be found in this town. Small investments can lead to big laughs if you hit the right nights. For all the side-splitting and beer-spewed-through-nose details, see below.

SHOWCASES, IMPROV & OTHER COMEDY ANTICS

Magnet Theater This third entry into the "Improv Comedy District" of north Chelsea learned its comedic lessons in Chicago and at the UCB. Emphasizing a more theatrical feel than its neighbors, the shows here attract student, resident, and pro players, generating laughs Tuesdays through Sundays. Most shows are $5, some are free, there's no drink minimum, and you can enjoy $1 PBRs during select performances.

254 W. 29th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ 212/244-8824. www.magnettheater.com. Subway: 1 to 28th St.

Manhattan Comedy Collective In bringing affordability to comedy, it helps to have a volunteer army. This collective pools talents to put on nights of stand-up, improv, plays, and music. With much of the staff working for love not money, the ticket prices are usually $10, with no drink minimum. Friday nights at the Sage Theater, usually with three acts per evening. In addition, on the first Sunday of the month, the MC^2 Reading Lab brings a free reading of comedic plays to Jimmy's No 43 (43 E. 7th St., near Second Ave., with a one-drink minimum).

The Sage Theater, 711 Seventh Ave., 2nd floor, btw. 47th and 48th sts. ✆ 917/450-6659. www.manhattancomedycollective.com. Subway: N/R/W to 49th St.

New York Comedy Club FREE Monday night's open mic night is the only affordable slot on the schedule here. It's the longest-running open mic in New York, there's no drink minimum, and although it's

statistically unlikely, it is perhaps possible to see an overlooked talent just breaking in. Open mic on Mondays, 5 to 7:30pm. For aspiring comedians, it's $3 for 5 minutes on stage.

241 E. 24th St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/696-LAFF** [5233]. www.newyorkcomedyclub.com. Subway: N/R/W or 6 to 23rd St.

The PIT This upstart has yet to reach the UCB's level of improv evolution, but they're headed in the right direction. The Peoples Improv Theater's primary mission is as a school, with an ex-SNL writer and Second City alum among the faculty. Many shows involve student performers and are priced accordingly. Monday through Saturday average four shows a night, with one more on select Sundays. Tickets for nuggets like the improv version of *Law & Order* run between $5 and $8. Wednesday night is the night not to miss. The Faculty and Big Black Car are among the four free sets of the night that bring out the heights of the PIT.

154 W. 29th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/563-7488.** www.thepitnyc.com. Subway: 1 or N/R/W to 28th St.

Rififi This shabby-chic bar put itself on the East Village cultural map with weekly screenings of *The Wizard of Oz,* creepily synched to Pink Floyd's "The Dark Side of the Moon." Comedy nights have lately taken over the back theater space, usually Tuesdays through Saturdays at 8pm, with a mix of sketch and stand up. This is one of New York's best spots to catch alternative comedy, and quality tends to be quite high (*Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* hands can be found here), although that's not reflected in the $5 covers. Check the website for the full calendar.

332 E. 11th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/677-1027.** www.rififinyc.com. Subway: L to First Ave.; N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

@Seaport **FREE** The comedy club Caroline's called this venue home in the '80s. The current incarnation is proudly DIY, with all shows put on for free. There's music here, as an indoor complement to the Seaport Music Festival, in addition to stand-up comedy. Shows feature multiple acts from laugh-slingers with résumés that name-check Letterman, Leno, and Conan. The shows are popular, and advance reservations are required. If you're too late to get on the list, you can take a shot at the same-day line and hope for a few no-shows.

219 Water St., at Beekman St. ✆ **212/SEAPORT** [732-7678]. www.seaportmusicfestival.com. Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

The Upright Citizens Brigade The UCB brings Chicago-style long-form improv comedy to the Big Apple. With founders that can be found on SNL and in the movies, the talent level is high, which is crucial in the hit-or-miss medium of improvisation. Plus, the complete lack of scripts saves you money. Sunday night sees two performances of ASSSSCAT 3000. The extra S's? For savings: The 7:30pm show is $8, but the 9:30pm version is absolutely free. Tickets are distributed at 8:15, but it's popular so try to get there at least 45 minutes early. Shows on Monday and Wednesday at 11pm are also free, as are most midnight shows on Fridays. The rest of the schedule runs between $5 and $10 (mostly $5), which is still a steal. The Harold Night's two $5 shows (Tues at 8 and 9:30pm) are especially noteworthy, with some rapier wits putting the old Harold technique through its paces.

Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre, 307 W. 26th St., btw. Eighth and Ninth aves. ✆ 212/366-9176. www.ucbtheatre.com. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

7 Game Night

Too damn smart? Bars (and other public spaces) across the city offer trivia nights, an excuse to meet new people and show off the fruits of all those wasted hours learning to differentiate between Arnold Snarb and Arnold Strong. New York will also let you flash your skills at Scrabble, spelling, and song recognition. Gather up some compatriots, or join a team of fellow-stragglers, and convert that synaptic alacrity into bragging rights and bar tabs.

Chelsea Market FREE This sprawling converted factory was the original home of the Oreo. Now supporting boutique food, wine, and flower shops, the market also makes a play for additional foot traffic via free culture. Free comedy runs once a month, there's music (p. 31), and you'll find a little of both plus serious brain-flexing at the weekly Chelsea Mind Games. Math bees, geography bees, vocab tournaments, and trivia nights alternate, with prizes to the winners. Get even smarter after the competition by sticking around for the Know-It-All Show, which trots out a local genius for your learning pleasure. Live music kicks off the evening at 6:30pm, providing a soundtrack for contestant sign-up. At 7:30pm, let the mind games begin.

75 Ninth Ave., btw. 15th and 16th sts. No phone. www.chelseamindgames.com. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Last Exit Pop Quiz @ Last Exit isn't free, but the $5 cover can be considered an investment. The cash goes into a pot for the eventual winner. Groups of four compete, and if you show up short-handed, they'll make a team for you. ***Warm up:*** Who wrote *Last Exit to Brooklyn?* First and third Mondays of the month, from 9 to 11pm. Register around 8:30pm and bring a pen or pencil. (***Answer:*** The late Hubert Selby, Jr.)

136 Atlantic Ave., btw. Clinton and Henry sts., Brooklyn Heights, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/222-9198. www.lastexitbar.com. Subway: M/R/2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall; F/G to Bergen St.

Pete's Candy Store At Pete's Wednesday Quizz-Off, categories range from general knowledge to music to top 10s, with prizes for the top three finishers. The action starts at 7:30pm. Alternatively, wordsmiths hammer at their tile forges during Scrabble Saturdays. Bring a partner and try your luck at doubles on Saturdays from 5 to 8pm. Tuesday nights from 7 to 9pm, Pete's feels even more small-town than usual when bingo scorecards fill the bar. Old and young show off their number/letter cognitive prowess for gag prizes. Not all gamed-out yet? How about revisiting ancient humiliations with a spelling bee? Every other Monday trip over words like "roriferous" and "keratic." Or is it kerratic? That's why the Williamsburg Spelling Bee operates on a gentle three-strike basis. Every other Monday 7 to 9pm; sign up early if you've come to spell. (Manhattanites can try their luck at Housing Works' offshoot bee; www.nycbee.com.) All games are free, though there's a loosely enforced two-drink minimum.

709 Lorimer St., btw. Frost and Richardson sts., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/302-3770. www.petescandystore.com. Subway: L to Lorimer St.; G to Metropolitan Ave.

Piano's FREE Rock is the focus of the weekly quiz night here. Your host, DJ Spookypants, augments questions with musical cues and the occasional musician guest. Winners can gloat over prize PBRs. Whether or not Van Halen is Yacht Rock won't be definitively answered, although the color of the M&M's banished from the band's backstage spreads will be. Mondays at 7:30pm, followed by free karaoke.

158 Ludlow St., at Stanton St. ✆ 212/505-3733. www.smartasstrivia.blogspot.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Rocky Sullivan's FREE After a decade sharing the love with Murray Hill, Rocky's has fled high rents for the relatively gentle shores of Red Hook. Programming remains the same, with no- and low-cover music, scattered readings, and Thursday night trivia. You can show off those nimble brain cells with the prodding of a congenial host, who leads participants through music, photo, and general knowledge quizzes. Victorious founts of knowledge are rewarded with fermented hops. No cover, no minimum; the game starts around 8:30pm.

34 Van Dyke St., at Dwight St. ✆ 718/246-8050. www.rockysullivans.com. Subway: F/G to Smith/9th St., then B77 bus.

Union Hall Hostess Sara Schaefer does her best Tom Kennedy at the monthly "Name That Tune" competition at this convivial Brooklyn pub. Beyond working your skills at recognizing notes, melodies, and lyrics, you'll put your visual acumen to the test by trying to identify adulterated album covers. The night of the week and start time vary, so check the website for details.

702 Union St., near Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/638-4400. www.unionhallny.com. Subway: M/R to Union St.; B/Q to Seventh Ave.

8 Talk It Up: TV Tapings

Why saddle yourself with those endless cable, satellite, and electric bills, when you could be watching TV for free? New York is home to a bunch of top-flight shows, many of which rely on live in-studio audiences to keep the energy levels high. In exchange for your enthusiasm (and patience), you'll get a great peek behind the curtain. Fans are always amazed at just how small the sets—and stars—really are. To make it even more worth your while, most shows employ MCs to get the crowd fired up, and often you can collect some swag in the form of T-shirts or free tickets to the MC's upcoming show.

TALKING POINTS

New York's most famous shows are incredibly popular, and waits of 6 months or longer are commonplace. Often you'll have to send a postcard or e-mail with your relevant info and preferred dates (***Note:*** Tickets to a taping make a great cheap birthday present). For those who arrive without tickets, it is possible to get standbys on the morning of the show. They'll only give one ticket per standee, so everyone in the party has to be there waiting at the crack of dawn. Even then it's no

guarantee, since standby status only kicks in if there are enough no-shows among the regular ticket holders. Of course, if you're not choosey about what you want to see, plenty of shows in New York are unpopular enough to get you in without delay. The NYCVB has more details on tapings (www.nycvb.com; ✆ **212/484-1222**).

The Colbert Report **FREE** Stephen Colbert's nightly "news" program has reached the cult status of *The Daily Show,* which spun it off in the fall of '05. Colbert's studio is *The Daily Show*'s cramped former home, making it a harder ticket to nab than its progenitor. Comedy Central has an online ticket request system, but it's usually booked up solid. For standby seating, you can hope for a no-show by going to the studio door. Tapings are Mondays through Thursdays at 7pm, but to have a shot for a standby you should get there by 4pm. You'll increase your chances if there isn't a big-name guest on the docket. Audience members must be at least 18. No bears.

513 W. 54th St., btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ 212/767-8600. www.comedycentral.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart **FREE** There's been no drought of mockable material in the news recently, which helps Jon Stewart's satirical news/talk show remain a water-cooler conversation staple. In addition to biting analysis of current events, if you attend a taping you'll be treated to a few minutes of personable conversation with Jon himself. Though the show is more popular than ever, it's filmed in a new and larger studio, so tickets aren't impossible to come by. Tapings are Monday through Thursday with doors open at 5pm, though they want you there an hour early. An online system will give you a seat about 5 months in advance. For shorter lead times, you can make a request via e-mail (requesttickets@thedailyshow.com); see the Comedy Central website for complete details. The minimum age is 18.

733 Eleventh Ave., btw. 51st and 52nd sts. ✆ 212/767-8600. www.comedycentral.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

Good Morning America **FREE** If seeing the face of Diane Sawyer first thing in the morning is actually an enticing prospect for you, join the live audience in ABC's studio right on Broadway. Tickets for the 7 to 9am broadcast can be wrangled by filling out the online request form. If you get tickets, plan on arriving at 6am. Sans tickets, you can still join the throng outside the Broadway and 44th Street studio window. ***Note:*** In the summers, big-name performers come to Bryant Park

for the **Good Morning America Summer Concert Series.** The shows are free and require no tickets, running from 7 to 9am (but get there by 7am at the very latest).

ABC Studios, 1500 Broadway, at 44th St. ✆ 212/580-5176. www.abcnews.go.com/GMA. Subway: N/Q/R/S/W/1/2/3/7 to Times Sq./42nd St.

Late Night **FREE** With Conan O'Brien heading out to take Leno's gig, the *Late Night* reigns have been passed to the likeable Jimmy Fallon. Although the exact details for audiences are still being settled, if policies remain generally the same, tapings will run Monday through Friday from 4:15 to 6:30pm. You can also try calling the NBC Ticket Office, and NBC may hand out 75 or so standbys on the day of taping (starting at 9am outside 30 Rockefeller Plaza—the GE Building, under the NBC Studios awning on the 49th St. side), one per person, with no guarantee of entry. You must be 16 or older to attend.

NBC Studio, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, 49th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/664-3056. www.nbc.com. Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; N/R/W to 49th St.

The Late Show with David Letterman **FREE** And the number-one hottest New York TV taping ticket is . . . yeah, it's still Letterman. Though it's not what it was in the '80s, the show has really picked it up lately, with our favorite Hoosier squeezing the most out of his regulars, and Paul and the band keeping things energetic. Tapings are Monday through Thursday usually at 5:30pm, sometimes with a second taping Thursday at 8pm. You can request tickets online (it's a lottery, and usually a 6-month wait) or you can stop by the theater in person. The lobby handles walk-ins on weekdays from 9:30am to 12:30pm, and weekends from 10am to 6pm. If you're feeling lucky, you can also try calling in for a same-day standby seat. The phone line opens at 11am. Be patient and use your redial button liberally. Also bone up on your Letterman trivia because you may need to pass a test to get the tickets (which aren't actually tickets, but are spots on the standby line, should anything open up and should you have correctly identified Biff Henderson's real first name as James). You must arrive an hour and a quarter before tape time, be 18 or older, and be ready to show some ID.

Ed Sullivan Theater, 1697 Broadway, btw. 53rd and 54th sts. ✆ 212/247-6497. www.cbs.com/latenight/lateshow (click on "Get Tickets"). Subway: B/D/E to Seventh Ave.

Live! with Regis and Kelly **FREE** If you don't have any plans for a year from now, why not go see Kelly and Rege? To join the absurdly long waiting list, send an e-mail, or a postcard with your data, to "Live with Regis and Kelly" Tickets, Ansonia Station, P.O. Box 230-777, New York, NY 10023-0777. You can request up to four tickets at a time. To line jump, you can try for a standby ticket. Show up at the studio by 7am on a taping day. Tapings are Monday through Friday at 9am at the ABC Studios in Lincoln Square on the Upper West Side. You must be 10 or older to attend (anyone under 18 must be accompanied by a parent).

7 Lincoln Sq., at Columbus Ave. and W. 67th St. ✆ 212/456-3054. www.bventertainment.go.com/tv/buenavista/regisandkelly/get_tickets.html. **Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.**

Saturday Night Live **FREE** SNL's steady devolution hasn't made getting in to see the show any easier. There's a lottery (around Aug usually; submit your name to snltickets@nbcuni.com) for the upcoming season; otherwise, your only shot is trying for standbys on the date of the taping. One ticket per person may be available at 7am at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, on the 49th Street side of the building, though even a standby ticket is no guarantee you'll get in. Tapings are Saturday at 11:30pm from fall to late spring, with a dress rehearsal at 8pm (last arrival time 10:45 and 7:15pm, respectively). You must be 16 or older to attend.

NBC Studio, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, 49th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/664-3056. www.nbc.com. **Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; N/R/W to 49th St.**

The Today Show **FREE** Watching NBC's morning mainstay is free and easy; just show up outside Today's glass-walled studio at Rockefeller Center, on the southwest corner of 49th Street and Rockefeller Plaza. Tapings are Monday through Friday from 7 to 10am, but if you want to be up front, 7am is way too late to be rushing over with your goofy hat and hand-painted sign. In the summer, *Today* holds a series of concerts in Rockefeller Center, generally on Friday mornings at 7am. It's always big names playing, and they attract commensurate huge crowds.

Southwest corner of 49th St. and Rockefeller Plaza. ✆ 212/664-3056. www.msnbc.msn.com. **Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; N/R/W to 49th St.**

Total Request Live **FREE** Carson Daly's countdown show continues to entrance Generation XL, which gathers below MTV's glass studio at 44th Street and Broadway in Times Square before the Monday and Tuesday 3:30pm tapings. Reservations can be made by e-mailing trlcasting@mtvstaff.com. Failing that, show up by 2pm at the latest and watch for a TRL producer to come through the crowd. Standby tickets are exchanged for the correct answers to trivia questions. The MTV Store on the corner of 44th and Broadway usually has flyers for additional tapings and events next to the register. To get inside to the studio you must be between 16 and 24.

1515 Broadway, at 44th St. ✆ 212/398-8549. www.mtv.com. Subway: N/Q/R/S/W/1/2/3/7 to Times Sq./42nd St.

The View **FREE** Barbara and crew chat away about cellulite, diets, calories, weight issues, and other urgent matters every Monday through Thursday at 11am. You can request online for a date at least 12 weeks in advance. Ticket holders are expected to show up by 9am sharp. The ticket backlog runs at least 12 months, but you can also try to nab a standby from a View Audience Associate at the studio entrance. Starting at 8:30am they'll give seats away. You must be at least 16 (bring ID).

320 W. 66th St., off West End Ave. ✆ 212/465-0900. www.abc.go.com/daytime/theview/tickets. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire **FREE** Millionaires miss out on all the fun listed in this book, but you can look on with condescending pity should anyone run the table against Meredith Vieira. Tapings are usually Monday through Wednesday at 2:30 and 4pm when the show is in production. Note that they'll want you there 2 hours early and the show can take 2 hours or longer to tape, so make sure you're fed and watered before you go in (and be warned that as posh as the set looks on television, those benches are hard). Requests for tickets can be made online; you must be 18 or older to attend.

ABC at 30 W. 67th St., btw. Columbus Ave. and Central Park West. ✆ 212/479-7755. www.millionairetv.com. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

9 Word Up: Readings

New York has always been a city of writers, and modern Gotham has no shortage of literary lights. Undiscovered hopefuls, midlist strivers, and the huge names with cult-like followings all find their way to

lecterns across the city. Bars, galleries, libraries, book stores, and schools do the hosting. With eight million other stories unfolding in the Naked City, most people don't take the time to be read to, and I usually find literary events are pleasantly underattended. There are exceptions—voices of the moment and package nights that bring in a bunch of big names at once—but generally you have a better chance to see a big-time writer up-close than you'll get with any actress, athlete, or musician. And almost always you'll get to do it for free.

AT BOOKSTORES

Bookshops are good spots for getting a hit of that sweet, sweet literature, and getting it for free. Some stores offer regular readings, and some just signings, but either way on a quiet night you may get the chance to talk up a favorite author.

Barnes & Noble FREE The Union Square location gets the biggest names and most frequent readings. Literary stars like David Sedaris, Helen Fielding, and Michael Chabon come through to read from their works or participate in conferences and discussions. For kids, Sundays at 2:30pm is story time. The seating area is large and comfortable, but you should show up early for the best-sellers because it does get crowded. A close second is the Lincoln Center location, with its steady big-shot parade.

33 E. 17th St., btw. Broadway and Park Ave. S. ✆ **212/253-0810.** www.bn.com. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq. Other location: *Lincoln Center*, 1972 Broadway, at 66th St. ✆ **212/595-6859.** Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Bluestockings FREE DIY ethos is in full effect at this newly expanded communal bookstore. Frequent readings of a feminist and lesbian bent intersperse with seminars and meetings. The readings and many lectures/discussions are free; other events can ask for suggested donations of $5 to $10. The **Dyke Knitting Circle** (✆ **212/714-8375**) meets the third Sunday of every month from 4 to 6pm. It's open to all levels of knitting skill; bring yarn and needles.

172 Allen St., btw. Rivington and Stanton sts. ✆ **212/777-6028.** www.bluestockings.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

BookCourt FREE For over 2 decades now, this Cobble Hill favorite has been a clean and well-lighted place for literary fans. The local authors section is comprehensive, which is impressive considering how many writers are calling the area home. In-store readings and

signings bring in the hip new voices and some great rock-'n'-roll chronicles.

163 Court St., btw. Dean and Pacific sts., Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/875-3677.** www.bookcourt.org. Subway: F/G to Bergen St., M/R to Court St.; 2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall.

Books of Wonder FREE The agenda here is books for the kiddies. Story time comes every Sunday at noon, with a dramatically inclined staff member doing the honors. Additional readings and events, including the occasional publication party, fill the calendar. Light refreshments are often served too.

18 W. 18th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/989-3270.** www.booksofwonder.net. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Drama Book Shop When this venerable performing-arts bookstore relocated a couple of years ago, they added a performing-arts space to the mix. The **Arthur Seelen Theatre** hosts discussions, readings, and workshops. The effort to build a community comes through clearly in events like monologue fests and headshot fests. Check online for the calendar; events can run as much as $20, but many (like Kathleen Turner giving a book talk) are offered for free.

250 W. 40th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/944-0595.** www.dramabookshop.com. Subway: A/C/E or 1/2/3/7 or N/R/Q/S/W to 42nd St.

McNally Robinson NYC FREE As every last retail inch of SoHo and NoLita seems primed to become a trendy restaurant or bar, the last newcomer one might expect would be a big, sophisticated bookstore. McNally Robinson is thriving, however, with an independent spirit and a

FREE The Chain Gang

With so many interesting mom-and-pop book stores in NYC, it would be tempting to ignore the corporate giants, if they weren't so ubiquitous. Despite the lack of indie cred, both Barnes & Noble (www.bn.com) and Borders (www.borders.com) are actually solid centers for free entertainment. With the square footage to pack in listeners by the bushel, and the juice to draw top names, some of the best readings in the city take place at Barnes & Noble (my favorite selection comes from the Union Sq. store; p. 89). Check the store windows or the website for the latest heavy-hitter to come shilling New York way.

knowledgeable staff. A full slate of readings, discussions, and signings can be found here.

50 Prince St., btw. Lafayette and Mulberry sts. ✆ 212/274-1160. www.mcnallyrobinsonnyc.com. Subway: 6 to Spring St., N/R/W to Prince St.

192 Books FREE This lovely newer shop brings in authors for 7pm readings. Night of the week varies, and seating is limited so call ahead for reservations, especially if it's Ethan Hawke reading Mayakovsky. (Mary Gaitskill and A.M. Homes have also graced this intimate space.) Check the website for schedule.

192 Tenth Ave., at 21st. ✆ 212/255-4022. www.192books.com. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

Printed Matter FREE "Artwork for the page" is the niche cornered by this organization, which specializes in affordable artists' publications. Book signings, launches, and exhibitions all can be found in their space near the heart of the Chelsea galleries.

195 Tenth Ave., btw. 21st and 22nd sts. ✆ 212/925-0325. www.printedmatter.org. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

Revolution Books The revolution will be televised, and it will also make its way into print. Alternative viewpoints are aired during in-store readings at this new location in the heart of the Machine.

146 W. 26th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/691-3345. www.revolutionbooksnyc.org. Subway: N/R/W or 1 to 28th St.

The Scholastic Store FREE The retail outlet for the children's publisher Scholastic has books and toys and a full schedule of in-store events. Every Tuesday and Thursday at 11am is story time, plus there are book signings and special events scattered across the schedule. Most everything is free, although craft workshops have a $5 materials fee. The Scholastic Auditorium hosts more free events, although often you have to call for a reservation first. Check online or call for the latest schedule.

557 Broadway, btw. Prince and Spring sts. ✆ 212/343-6166. www.scholastic.com/sohostore. Subway: N/R/W to Prince St.

Three Lives & Company FREE Just browsing in this low-key West Village legend makes a person feel smarter and more sophisticated. Pressed-tin ceilings and exposed brick complement a classy selection. Though space is tight here, the readings and signings are worth checking out.

154 W. 10th St., at Waverly Place. ✆ **212/741-2069.** www.threelives.com. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

AT BARS & CAFES (& LAUNDROMATS)

What better way to advertise the intelligent conversation your coffee shop or booze hall induces than by associating yourself with articulate new voices? Reading series have cropped up in bars and cafes (and even laundromats) across the city, and the informal settings encourage more showmanship than a bookshop lectern. With extreme readings the latest trend, these venues are likely spots to be entertained while listening to an author intone.

Bowery Poetry Club Poetry is just the beginning here, with music, theater, and beer adding to the enticements. A ramshackle vibe pervades, with exposed brick on the walls and a communal attitude. The calendar overflows with burlesque, book parties, open mics, bingo nights, slams, and plenty of other forms of poesy. Covers average around $6, but many free events can be found (some with two-drink minimums).

308 Bowery, btw. E. 1st and Bleecker sts. ✆ **212/614-0505.** www.bowerypoetry.com. F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

Café Scientifique FREE This organization has some 150 chapters around the globe, bringing scientific savants and the curious layperson together. Speakers are volunteers, covering intriguing topics like "Broken Hearts, Cravings, and Your Orbitofrontal Cortex: Understanding the Brain and Subjective Experience." After the lecture comes a Q&A, followed by general socializing. The talks of the New York chapter are free, the first Tuesday of each month; check the website for locations, www.sciencecafenyc.org.

Dirty Laundry: Loads of Prose FREE With New York's perennial space squeezes, it's not so surprising that a reading series wedges itself into working laundromats. Attendees not only get scintillating prose and poesy (and the occasional musical performance), they also come out with clean duds: Quarters and detergent are provided for those toting their laundry bags. Readings are sporadic and times and locations vary; check the website.

Laundromats vary, check website. ✆ **917/501-9825.** www.dirtylaundryreadings.com.

Ear Inn FREE The structure housing this TriBeCa tavern was condemned as unfit for habitation in 1906. Somehow it's still upright, and still putting on one of the city's best reading series. Poetry, and occasional prose, can be heard at the Ear every Saturday at 3pm.

326 Spring St., btw. Greenwich and Washington sts. ✆ 212/226-9060. www.mbroder.com/ear_inn. Subway: C/E to Spring St.; 1 to Canal St.

Earshot Reading Series at the Lucky Cat Lounge A focus on MFA student work separates this bi-monthly reading series. Although that means less polished material, it also provides the opportunity to catch real up-and-comers. Established writers also make appearances. The show does come with a $5 cover, but then it also comes with a free drink; 8pm, in the campus coffee shop–style confines of Billyburg's Lucky Cat.

245 Grand St., btw. Driggs and Roebling sts., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/782-0437. www.earshotnyc.com. Subway: L to Bedford Ave.; G to Lorimer/Metropolitan.

The Half King FREE *The Perfect Storm* author Sebastian Junger is a co-owner of this bustling Chelsea bar and cafe. He's also an occasional contributor to their weekly reading series, which presents writers most every Monday night at 7pm. The authors and titles selected here are excellent and all but guaranteed to provoke. About once a month also look for gallery talks and slide shows related to the rotating art hung in the bar.

505 W. 23rd St., near Tenth Ave. ✆ 212/462-4300. www.thehalfking.com. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

Happy Ending FREE This Chinatown lounge, whose name advertises a salient detail about the services of the former tenant (a massage parlor), is home to the city's most ambitious reading series. Monthly "In the Flesh" nights bring echoes of the space's past as writers strut their smut. "Varsity Letters" is New York's only sports writing series and it has its own spinoff in the "Non-Motivational Reading Series," which provides postmodern insight. Mr. Beller's Neighborhood drops by once a month with slices of city life. Every other Wednesday is reserved for the "Music and Reading" night, which requires participants to take at least one public risk. That might be a cooking demonstration and it might be the public airing of a credit card number; it'll definitely be more than somebody with a nose in a book mumbling into a lectern. Readings start at 8pm.

302 Broome St., at Forsythe St. ✆ **212/334-9676.** www.happyendinglounge.com. Subway: B/D to Grand St.; F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Housing Works Used Book Café FREE In addition to a great selection of used books, Housing Works attracts an impressive lineup of writers. Readings are free, but if you drop some money on cafe items it'll end up in a good place; Housing Works is a charity that donates proceeds to help support people living with AIDS. Plays and musical performances have been added, although these usually come with a charge. Times and days of the week vary; check the website for the schedule.

126 Crosby St., btw. Houston and Prince sts. ✆ **212/334-3324.** www.livefromhome.org. Subway: B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette; 6 to Bleecker St.

KGB Bar FREE Hidden away in a former speakeasy on the second floor of an East Village tenement, KGB has the most comprehensive reading series in the city. Sunday night brings fiction, Monday poetry, Tuesday nonfiction, and some Wednesdays feature the fantastic, in the form of sci-fi authors. Drunken! Careening! Writers! is a great monthly night, with at least one big laugh guaranteed. Additional readers on the balance of evenings make it almost impossible to find a wordless night. The bar was once the clubhouse of the Ukrainian Labor Home, and the commie kitsch adorning the walls perfects the literary atmosphere. Most readings start at 7pm.

85 E. 4th St., near Second Ave. ✆ **212/505-3360.** www.kgbbar.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

One Story at Pianos FREE One Story is a literary magazine with a self-explanatory philosophy. Once a month (the first Fri of the month at 7pm) at Pianos, the magazine trots out a singular writer for a short, free reading and a happy hour, with a spotlight on One Drink chosen by the author.

158 Ludlow St., at Stanton St. ✆ **212/505-3733.** www.one-story.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Pete's Candy Store FREE Not content with a mere single literary evening, Pete's brings in the ink-slingers on Thursdays and Fridays. Alternating Thursdays focus on local writers, favoring fiction, with Jonathan Ames and Jim Shepard making recent appearances. Alternating Fridays are reserved for those of the poesy persuasion. Jams succeed the orating (check "For Those About to Rock," earlier in the chapter). Readings start at 7pm.

709 Lorimer St., btw. Frost and Richardson sts., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/302-3770.** www.petescandystore.com. Subway: L to Lorimer St.; G to Metropolitan Ave.

Reading Between A and B at 11th Street Bar FREE This series specializes in emerging poets, with occasional fiction and nonfiction sprinkled into the mix. The neighborhood bar that hosts couldn't be more congenial. Every other Monday at 7:30pm.

510 E. 11th St., btw. aves. A and B. ✆ **212/982-3929.** www.readab.com. Subway: L to First Ave.

Secret Science Club FREE With the whole dying-planet thing going on these days, science is enjoying a resurgence in the popular imagination. This monthly series attracts physicists, mathematicians, and even Nobel Prize–winning biologists. In addition to a free lecture, there are screenings, live music, and science-themed cocktails. The first Monday of the month at 8pm in the Union Hall basement, doors open at 7:30pm, and the limited seats go fast. (Also look out for a parallel lecture series, "Adult Education," one Tues a month.)

702 Union St., near Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/638-4400.** www.secretscienceclub.blogspot.com. Subway: M/R to Union St.; B/Q to Seventh Ave.

AT THE LIBRARIES

The sharks running New York's libraries have cooked up a scheme for self-perpetuation. Free readings, that's how they hook you. You like what the writer has to say, you can't resist the urge to learn more, and before you know it you're checking out books left and right. Diabolical.

The following libraries are the best for frequent readings. Check in at **www.nypl.org** for full schedules and other branches.

- **Brooklyn Public Library** Grand Army Plaza. ✆ **718/230-2100.** www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org. Subway: 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza.
- **Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center** 100-01 Northern Blvd., btw. 102nd and 103rd sts., Corona, Queens. ✆ **718/651-1100.** www.queenslibrary.org. Subway: 7 to 103rd St./Corona Plaza.
- **New York Public Library for the Performing Arts** Donald and Mary Oenslager Gallery. 40 Lincoln Center Plaza, btw. 64th and 65th sts. ✆ **212/870-1630.** www.nypl.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

- **New York Public Library Humanities and Social Sciences Library** Fifth Ave., at 42nd. ✆ **212/869-8089.** www.nypl.org. Subway: 7 to Fifth Ave.; 4/5/6 to Grand Central; B/D/F/V to 42nd St.
- **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture** 515 Malcolm X Blvd. (Lenox Blvd.), at 135th St. ✆ **212/491-2200.** www.nypl.org. Subway: 2/3 to 135th St.

10 Big Leagues, Little Prices

It's said that it's now cheaper to be an opera fan than to follow a major league sports team, and with ticket prices racing well ahead of inflation it's easy to believe. The Mets and Yankees are each inaugurating new stadiums, so don't look for many bargains there, and the NFL has long since climbed into the stratosphere. Premium Knicks seats? Prices top out over $330. This for a team that hasn't played a second-round playoff game since the last millennium? If you're seeking an affordable sporting event, your best bet may be outside the major leagues.

Baby Bombers The **Staten Island Yankees** have a lovely new waterfront stadium just a few steps from the ferry terminal. Running from $7 to $13, tickets are easier to come by than the Cyclones', although they're scarce when the two rivals play. The picnic area is only $7, and cheap seats down the first- and third-base lines are $5 to $7 each.

Richmond County Bank Ballpark, Staten Island. ✆ **718/720-9200.** www.siyanks.com. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 1 to South Ferry, take the ferry to Staten Island and follow the signs.

Knicks & Cut-Rate Seats Ten-dollar Knicks seats are about as elusive as Knicks playoff victories. They do exist, but they're nosebleeds and they tend to sell out quickly. If you don't pick them up in September when they first go on sale, your best bet is to check the "Stub Hub" on the Knicks website, where season-ticket holders unload their spares at list.

Madison Square Garden, 4 Pennsylvania Plaza, Seventh Ave., at 34th St. ✆ **212/465-6741.** www.nba.com/knicks. Subway: A/C/E or 1/2/3 to Penn Station.

Mini Mets No one confuses the **Brooklyn Cyclones** for dem bums of old, but the new stadium near the Atlantic Ocean and the Coney Island boardwalk has fast become a borough fave. Box seats are $12 or $14 on the weekdays, and $14 or $15 on the weekends. General admission and bleachers seats will only set you back $7 weekdays, $8 weekends. (Add a buck to both prices if you don't purchase your

Playing the Horses

Horse racing has seen its bottom line repeatedly gouged by the dumb luck of state lotteries. Every year fewer and fewer fans trek out to the track, which means Belmont and the Big A will be happy to see you when you go. So happy, in fact, that they'll let you in for only a nominal charge. While it's possible to lose some real money on the ponies, I have a system. Always pick the first horse off the rail that's wearing red, or any horse whose name begins with B. You can't miss.

Aqueduct Racetrack Thoroughbred racing runs from late October or early November to early May. 110th St. and Rockaway Blvd., Rockaway Beach, Queens. ✆ **718/641-4700.** www.nyra.com. Tickets $1. Closed Mon–Tues. Subway: A to North Conduit.

Belmont Park When the season ends at Aqueduct (see above), the ponies run here, from May through July, and September through October. Hempstead Ave., Belmont, Long Island. ✆ **516/488-6000.** www.nyra.com. Tickets $2–$5. Closed Mon–Tues. Train: LIRR Belmont Express from Penn Station or Flatbush Ave.

seats before game day.) Though some of the sheen is off the new stadium, tickets still go quickly.

Keyspan Park, 1904 Surf Ave., at W. 19th St., Coney Island, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/449-8497.** www.brooklyncyclones.com. Subway: D/F/N/Q to Coney Island/Stillwell Ave.

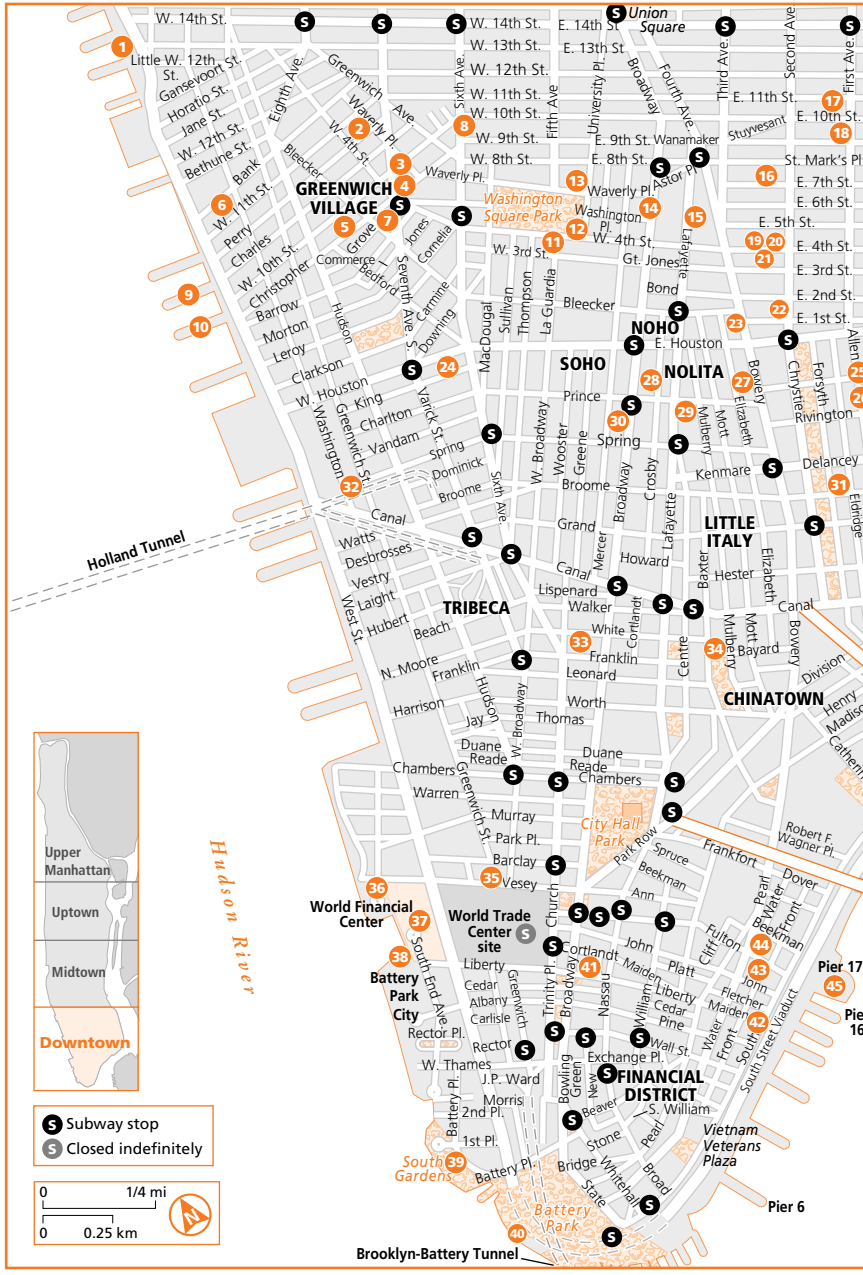
Rumble on the River FREE Practitioners of the sweet science assemble every summer on the Hudson at this offshoot of the Church Street Boxing Gym's legendary amateur bouts. There's a full-on ring and no punches pulled as a series of pugilists go three rounds apiece. The event takes place at Pier 84, usually on a Thursday night in mid-summer.

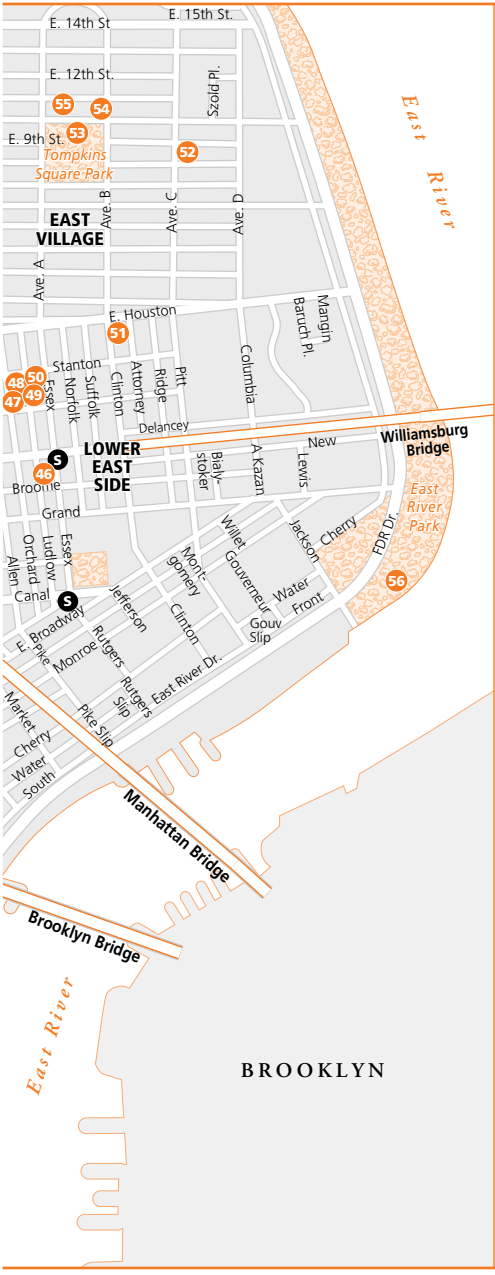
Pier 84, at W. 44th St. and the Hudson. ✆ **212/533-7275.** www.hudsonriverpark.org. Subway: A/C/E/7 to 42nd St./Port Authority. Walk toward the river.

Sweet Land of Liberty The Liberty offer more cheap ways to get into Madison Square Garden than their male counterparts. They also play harder. Though prices go as high as $260, you can find a fair amount of upper-row seating for $10.

Madison Square Garden, 4 Pennsylvania Plaza, Seventh Ave., at 34th St. ✆ **212/465-6075.** www.wnba.com/liberty. Subway: A/C/E or 1/2/3 to Penn Station.

ENTERTAINMENT DOWNTOWN

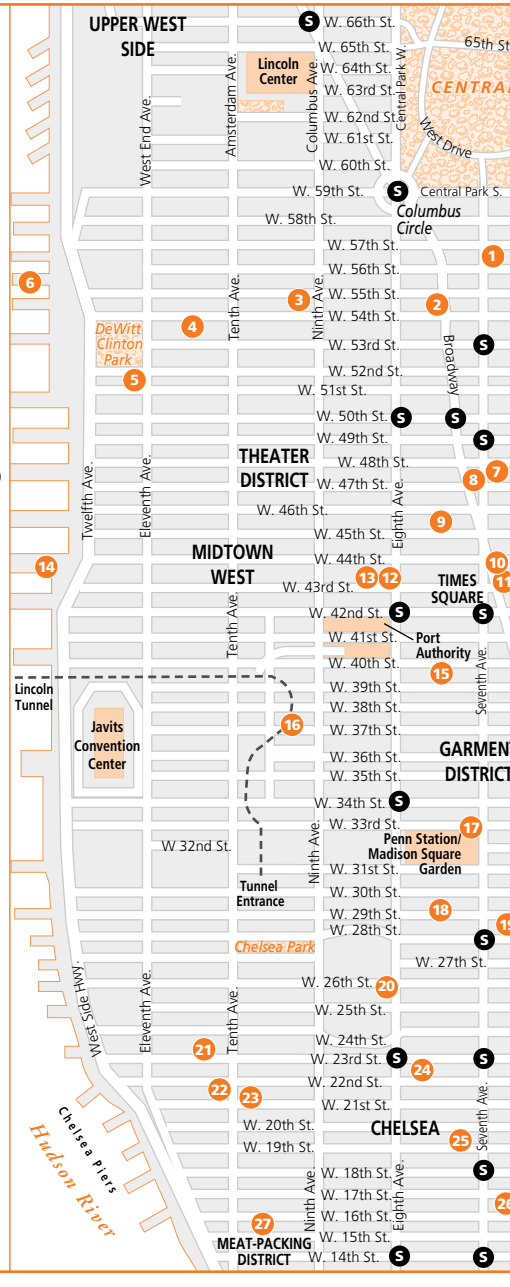




11th St. Bar **55**
180 Maiden Lane **42**
55 Bar **4**
7 World Trade Center Plaza **35**
Arlene's Grocery **48**
Arthur's Tavern **7**
@Seaport **44**
Banjo Jim's **52**
Bluestockings **26**
Bowery Poetry Club **23**
Castle Clinton **40**
Deutsches Haus **13**
Dixon Place **27**
Ear Inn **32**
East River Park Amphitheater **56**
Film Forum **24**
Dance Conversations at the Flea Theater **33**
Happy Ending **31**
Housing Works Used Book Café **28**
Jefferson Market Library **8**
KGB Bar **20**
La Mama **21**
Lakeside Lounge **54**
The Living Room/Googie's Lounge **49**
Lucille Lortel Theatre **5**
MC2 Reading Lab at Jimmy's No 43 **16**
McDonald's near Ground Zero **41**
McNally Robinson **29**
The New School for Drama Theater **6**
New York Theatre Workshop **19**
North Cove **36**
NYU/Tisch School of the Arts **14**
NYU's Skirball Center **11**
Parkside Lounge **51**
Pianos **50**
Pier 45 **10**
Pier 46 **9**
Pier 54 **1**
The Public Theater **15**
Rattlestick Playwrights Theater **2**
Rififi **17**
Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park **39**
Rockefeller Park **38**
Rockwood Music Hall **25**
The Scholastic Store **30**
Second on Second **22**
Shakespeare in the Park(ing) Lot **46**
The Slipper Room **47**
South Street Seaport **45**
The Theater for the New City **18**
Three Lives & Company **3**
TKTS Booth Downtown **43**
Tompkins Square Park **53**
Washington Square Music Festival **12**
Winnie's **34**
World Financial Center Plaza **37**

ENTERTAINMENT MIDTOWN

192 Books **23**
58th Street Library **51**
Austrian Cultural Forum **46**
Baryshnikov Arts Center **16**
Barnes & Noble Union Square **30**
Books of Wonder **29**
Bryant Park **40**
Cap21 **28**
Carnegie Hall **1**
Chelsea Market **27**
Clearview 9 Cinema **24**
Clinton Cove **5**
The Colbert Report **4**
Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza **43**
The Daily Show with Jon Stewart **6**
Drama Book Shop **15**
Emerging Artists Theatre **13**
Epiphany Library **33**
Good Morning America **10**
The Half King **21**
Humanities and Social Sciences Library **39**
Joseph Patelson Music House **50**
Julia Miles Theater **3**
Late Night **44**
The Late Show with David Letterman **2**
Madison Square Garden **17**
Magnet Theater **18**
Manhattan Comedy Collective
at The Sage Theater **7**
The Martin E. Segal Theatre Center **38**
Mercantile Library **42**
MoMA **47**
Movement Research at Dance
Theater Workshop **25**
New York Comedy Club **35**
Pier 84 **14**
The Pit **19**
Printed Matter **22**
Revolution Books **36**
Rodeo Bar **37**
Rubin Museum of Art **26**
Saturday Night Live at NBC Studios **44**
Second Stage Theatre **12**
Shubert Alley **9**
Solar One at Stuyvesant Cove Park **34**
Sony Wonder Technology Lab **49**
TKTS Booth Midtown **8**
The Today Show **45**
Total Request Live **11**
Town Hall **41**
Union Square **31**
The Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre **20**
Washington Irving High School **32**
The York Theatre Company
at St. Peter's Church **48**



UPPER EAST SIDE
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East Drive
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York Ave.
Sutton Pl. South
Sutton Pl.
Beekman Place
Mitchell Place
Rockefeller Center
Sixth Ave. (Ave. of the Americas)
Madison Ave.
Park Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
First Ave.
Second Ave.
Vanderbilt Ave.
Grand Central Terminal
United Nations
Bryant Park
New York Public Library
Empire State Bldg.
Broadway
Park Ave. S.
Madison Square Park
Gramercy Park
Irving Pl.
Union Sq. W.
Union Sq. E.
Union Square
N.D. Perlman Pl.
Asser Levy Pl.
Peter Cooper Village
Stuyvesant Town
Queens-Midtown Tunnel
FDR Drive
Tunnel Exit
Tunnel Entrance
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0 0.25 km
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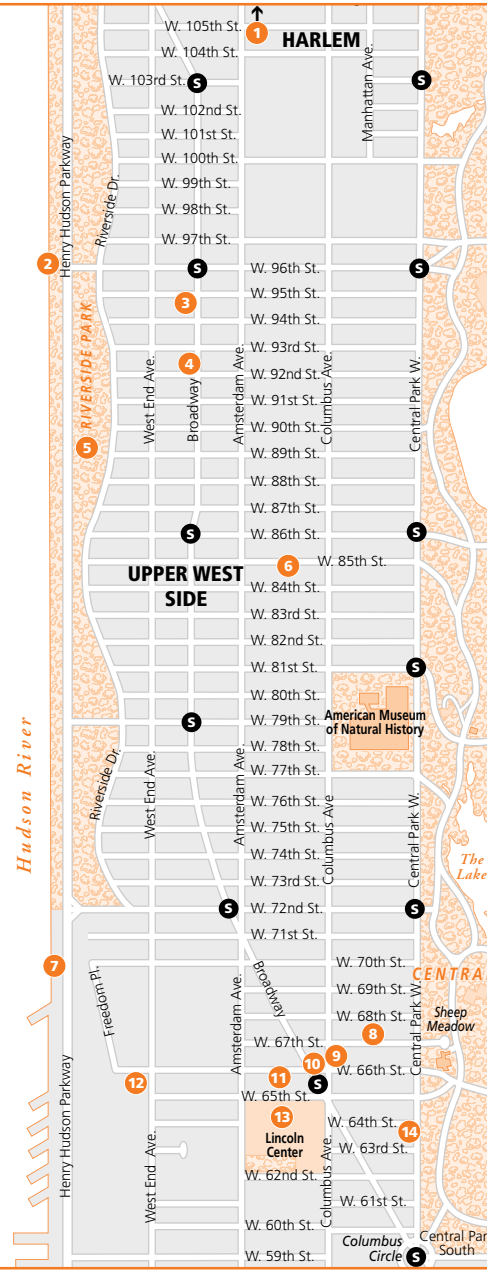
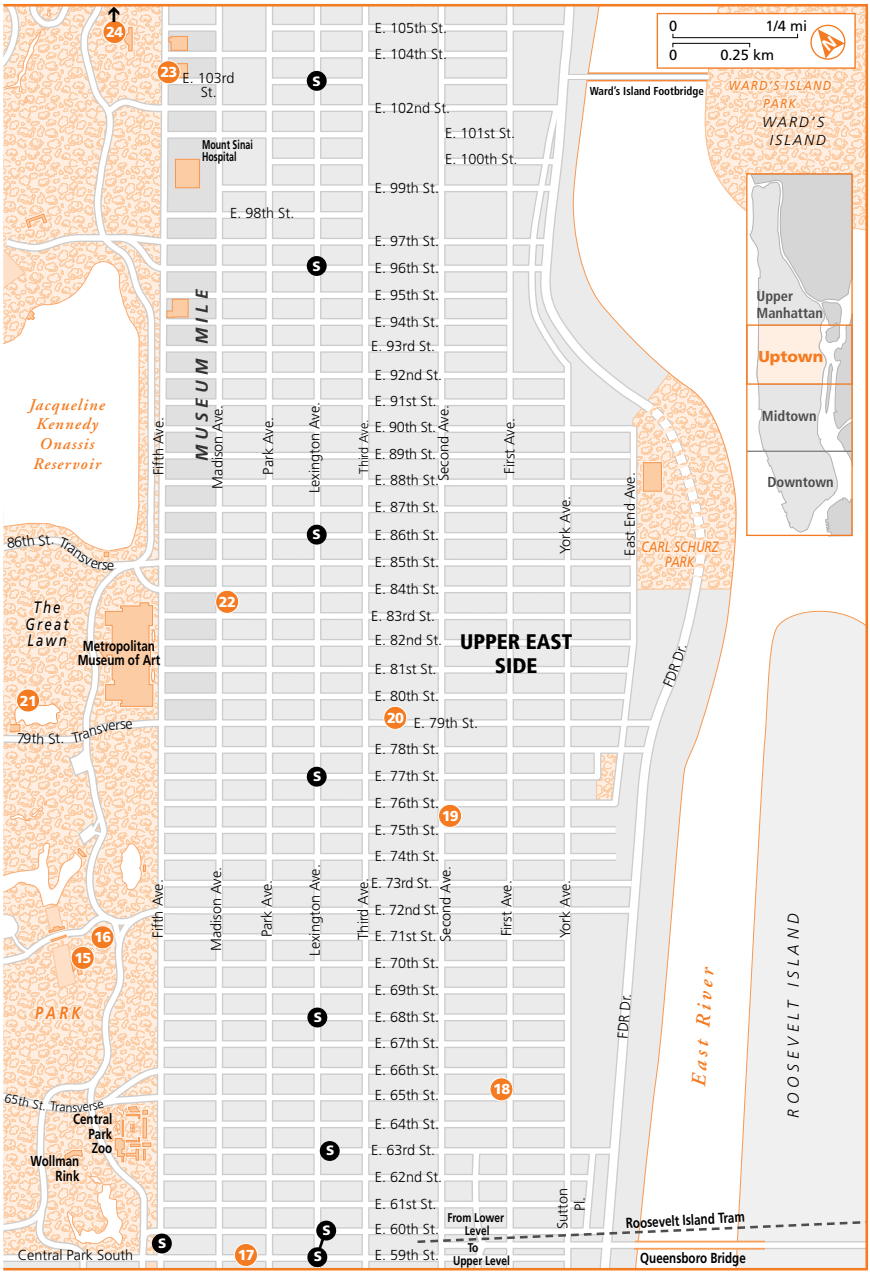
Uptown
Midtown
Downtown
Subway stop

ENTERTAINMENT UPTOWN

- Barnes & Noble Lincoln Center **10**
- Cleopatra's Needle **4**
- Czech Center **22**
- Delacorte Theater **21**
- El Museo del Barrio **23**
- Ethical Culture Sony Wonder Technology Lab **50**
- TKTS Booth Midtown **8**
- The Today Show **46**
- Total Request Live Society **14**
- Florence Gould Hall **17**
- Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church **11**
- Harlem Meer/Dana Discovery Center **24**
- Iggy's **19**
- The Juilliard School **13**
- Live! with Regis and Kelly **9**
- Mannes College of Music **6**
- Metropolitan Opera (Lincoln Center) **13**
- Naumburg Bandshell **15**
- New York City Opera (Lincoln Center) **13**
- New York Philharmonic (Lincoln Center) **13**
- New York Public Library for the Performing Arts **13**
- O'Flanagan's **18**
- Pier I **7**
- Riverside Clay Tennis Association **2**
- Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument **5**
- St. John the Divine **1**
- SummerStage at Rumsey Playfield **16**
- Symphony Space **3**
- The View **12**
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire at ABC Studios **8**
- Yorkville Branch Library **20**



S Subway stop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WARD'S ISLAND PARK
WARD'S ISLAND
Ward's Island Footbridge
Upper Manhattan
Uptown
Midtown
Downtown
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir
MUSEUM MILE
Mount Sinai Hospital
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E. 104th St.
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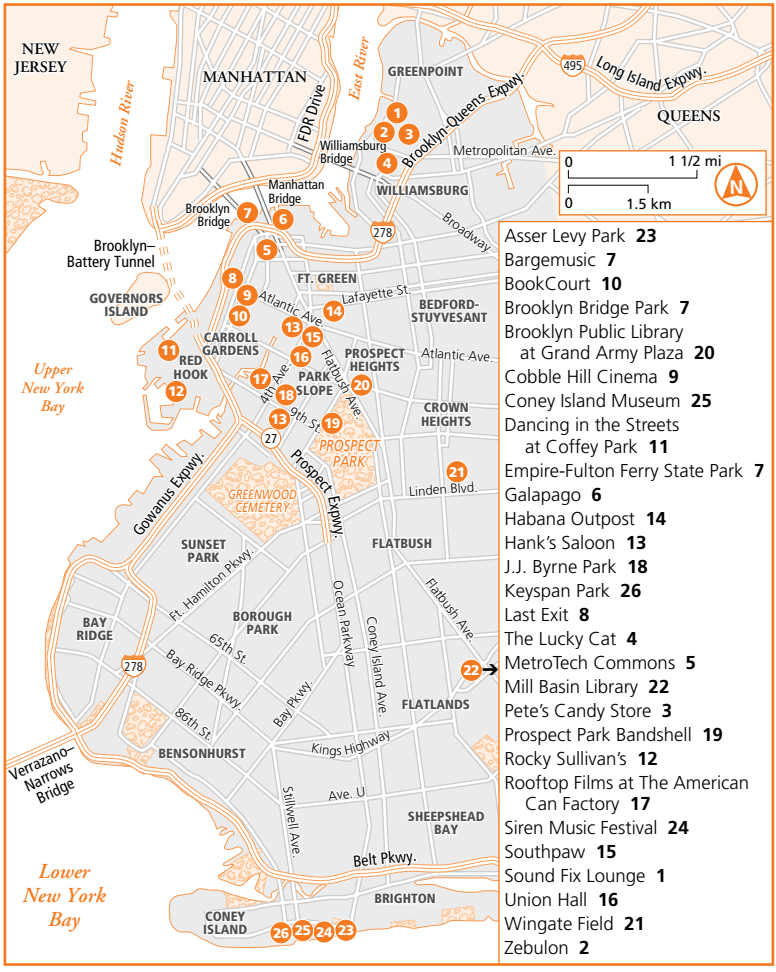
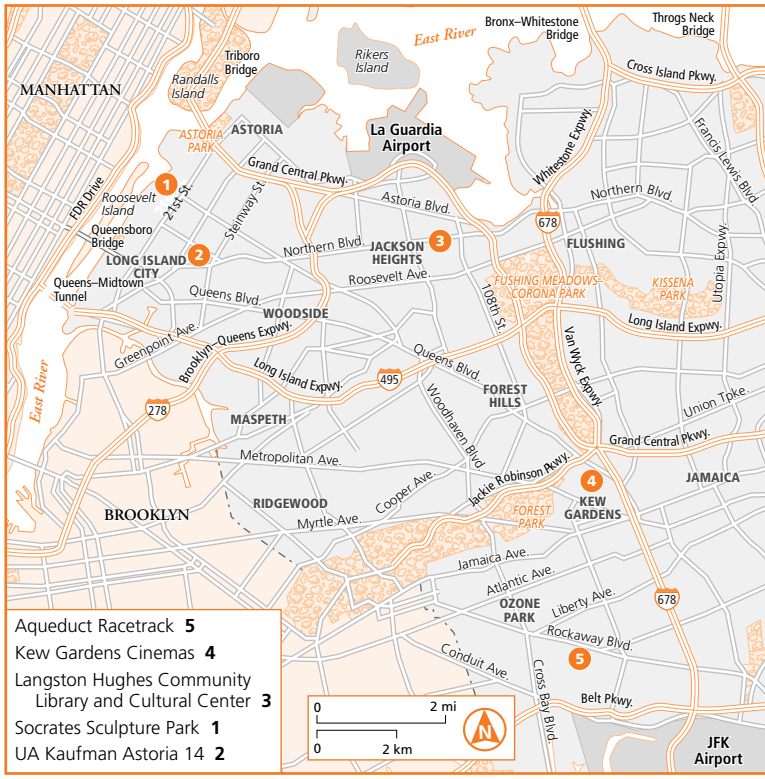
Fifth Ave.
Madison Ave.
Park Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
Second Ave.
First Ave.
York Ave.
East End Ave.
CARL SCHURZ PARK
FDR Dr.
UPPER EAST SIDE
86th St. Transverse
The Great Lawn
Metropolitan Museum of Art
79th St. Transverse
PARK
65th St. Transverse
Central Park Zoo
Wollman Rink
Central Park South
East River
ROOSEVELT ISLAND
From Lower Level To Upper Level
Sutton Pl.
Roosevelt Island Tram
Queensboro Bridge

ENTERTAINMENT IN BROOKLYN



Asser Levy Park **23**
Bargemusic **7**
BookCourt **10**
Brooklyn Bridge Park **7**
Brooklyn Public Library at Grand Army Plaza **20**
Cobble Hill Cinema **9**
Coney Island Museum **25**
Dancing in the Streets at Coffey Park **11**
Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park **7**
Galapago **6**
Habana Outpost **14**
Hank's Saloon **13**
J.J. Byrne Park **18**
Keyspan Park **26**
Last Exit **8**
The Lucky Cat **4**
MetroTech Commons **5**
Mill Basin Library **22**
Pete's Candy Store **3**
Prospect Park Bandshell **19**
Rocky Sullivan's **12**
Rooftop Films at The American Can Factory **17**
Siren Music Festival **24**
Southpaw **15**
Sound Fix Lounge **1**
Union Hall **16**
Wingate Field **21**
Zebulon **2**

ENTERTAINMENT IN QUEENS



Aqueduct Racetrack **5**

Kew Gardens Cinemas **4**

Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center **3**

Socrates Sculpture Park **1**

UA Kaufman Astoria 14 **2**

Selective diners can find cheap eats all over Gotham; the Lower East Side's Tiengarden serves refined takes on vegan fare at affordable prices. *See p. 117 for a review.*

3 EATING & DRINKING

New Yorkers speak over 130 languages, and we eat at least that many different cuisines. Many of the ethnic superstars are hidden away in low-rent corners of the boroughs, but plenty of spectacular cheap eats can be found even in the high-rent districts of Manhattan. Being selective about price doesn't necessarily mean sacrificing quality. Some of my favorite cooking just happens to be some of the city's cheapest. The island tilts toward downtown when it comes to budget grazing—Chinatown and the Lower East Side dominate. Across the rest of the city, Asian eateries offer the most for the least. Culinary trends have been favoring the low end of late. New purveyors

of cheap burgers, hot dogs, fried chicken, and pizza dot the city. Lunch specials are a great way to sample the city's harvest with a minimal investment, but for all meals I'm constantly surprised by how far $6 or $7 can take me in NYC. Leave the Jacksons in the wallet and *bon appétit*.

1 Fine Chinese

New York's headquarters for cheap eating is Chinatown. Between the foreign language and the strange sights and smells, it's easy to feel like you've wandered into another country—a country where the local currency is weak and the dollar is strong. Don't bother recalculating the exchange rate, however. The check really is that low.

Congee Village *CHINESE* LOWER EAST SIDE The Chinese–Disney–acid trip interior here has been scaled back, resulting in a marble and brick expanse that could almost pass for classy. The house specialty is congee, a hearty rice porridge that starts at $2 and comes in multiple combinations. My favorite is squid with ginger, for $2.95. For sharing, try the house special chicken, a banquet plate of garlicky delight at $9 for a half. Lunch specials, served over rice, average $3.50. FINE PRINT The original space is wildly popular; for shorter waits try the new Bowery satellite location. Also, don't let them shove you in an empty first-floor corner; ask to sit with the cool kids on the upper floor.

100 Allen St., btw. Delancey and Broome sts. ✆ 212/941-1818. www.congeevillagerestaurants.com. Daily 10:30am–2am. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St. *Bowery*, 207 Bowery, btw. Spring and Rivington sts. ✆ 212/766-2828. Subway: J/M/Z to Bowery; 6 to Spring St.

Grand Sichuan International *CHINESE* CHELSEA Don't be fooled by the average decor or below-average prices—this place serves the best Chinese food in the city. The menu is phone-book thick, but it's hard to make a bad pick here. Orange beef, string beans, and General Tso's chicken are three normal-sounding dishes that get reworked into Szechuan gems. You can splurge on more expensive items like the amazing $16.95 smoked tea duck, but if you limit your ordering to the many under-$10 entrees you won't be disappointed. The soup dumplings ($5.25–$6.25) are legendary. Lunches are not heavily attended, despite the $5.75 specials. At dinner time arrive early or arrive patient. FINE PRINT There's a slightly different menu, but the food is equally spectacular at the St. Marks location.

229 Ninth Ave., at 24th St. ✆ **212/620-5200.** www.thegrandsichuan.com. Daily 11:30am–11pm. Subway: C/E to 23rd St. Other locations: *East Village*, 19–23 St. Marks Place, btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/529-4800.** Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St. *West Village*, 15 Seventh Ave. S., btw. Carmine and Leroy sts. ✆ **212/645-0222.** Subway: 1 to Houston St. *Midtown East*, 1049 Second Ave., btw. 55th and 56th sts. ✆ **212/355-5855.** Subway: E/V to Lexington Ave./53rd St.; 4/5/6 to Lexington Ave./59th St. *Chinatown*, 125 Canal St., at Chrystie St. ✆ **212/625-9212.** Subway: B/D to Grand St.

Hong Kong Station *CHINESE* CHINATOWN DIY soup-designing saves you money! Less labor-intensive than shabu shabu, Hong Kong Station does the work once you've selected a noodle, a broth, and fillings. The usual Chinatown body parts (that is, pig's blood, beef shin, and chicken gizzards) are joined by greens, tofu, and taut fish balls. Garlic and hot sauces top it all off, along with scallions and "parsley" (well, cilantro actually—somebody fire the translator). A noodle soup with one topping is $3; additional toppings are just $1.25 each.

128 Hester St., btw. Chrystie St. and the Bowery. ✆ **212/966-9382.** Sun–Thurs 7am–8:30pm; Fri–Sat 7am–9:30pm. Subway: B/D to Grand St. *Also in Chinatown*, 45 Bayard St., at Elizabeth St. ✆ **212/233-0288.** Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St. *Also in Chinatown*, 45 Division St., btw. Market and Catherine sts. ✆ **212/966-9682.** Subway: F to E. Broadway; J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Super Taste Restaurant *CHINESE* CHINATOWN In the back of this barebones little soup shop you can see the noodle-maker at work, ritualistically stretching out dough with the same care as a pizza maker. The noodles themselves are taut and flavorful, dunked into a rich beef broth that originated along the Silk Road. Soups average $4. Steamed dumplings with silky wrappings make a great side at $3.

26 N. Eldridge St., btw. Canal and Division sts. ✆ **212/625-1198.** Daily 10am–11pm. Subway: F to E. Broadway; B/D to Grand St.

Vanessa's Dumpling House *CHINESE/DUMPLINGS* LOWER EAST SIDE If they tripled their prices, this little shop on the Lower East Side–end of Chinatown would still be laughably cheap. They offer an amazing $2 sandwich, a big wedge of sesame pancake with roasted beef or pork in a fresh cilantro and carrot dressing. Add 25¢ and go full-on gourmet with Peking duck. Dumplings make a great side, four for $1 and cooked in a thick, flavorful wrapping. Soups start at 75¢, buns at 3/$1.00 A major overhaul doubled the size of the space so

you can order without too much chaos then sit down to eat. FINE PRINT There's a satellite location on 14th Street, but its prices are higher and the food not quite as good.

118 Eldridge St., btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ 212/625-8008. Daily 7:30am–10:30pm. Subway: B/D to Grand St. *East Village*, 220 E. 14th St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ 212/529-1329. Subway: L to Third Ave.

Yi Mei Gourmet Food *CHINESE* CHINATOWN I'm all for capitalism if it means that two tasty buffets will set up side-by-side shops and compete for the cheapest, freshest food around. Yi Mei and its neighbor Golden Bowl both put out a dozen-plus daily entrees, from salt-and-pepper shrimp to century eggs to baby *bok choy*. Choose any four items and it's only $3.50 ($3.25 at Golden Bowl), and that includes a cup of soup (which resembles bathwater and should be skipped). Both restaurants are good, but for my (almost no) money, Yi Mei's got the edge.

51 Division St., btw. Market and Catherine sts. ✆ 212/925-1921. Subway: F to E. Broadway; J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

2 Pots & Pan-Asians/Cheaps from the East

There's no excuse for ever getting bored with New York cuisine. When you've had your share of Chinese, check out the broader Pan-Asian possibilities, which offer the best in New York's cheap ethnic alternatives.

Bennie's Thai Café *THAI* FINANCIAL DISTRICT This unprepossessing basement spot serves authentic Thai food that bursts with flavor. Worker bees stream in for the $5.25 lunch specials, served over rice on weekdays from 11am to 3pm. Red, yellow, and green curries are the highlights. The dishes are pork, chicken, and beef, so vegetarians have to order off the regular menu. Helpfully, vegetarian entrees, including an awesome pad thai, keep to the $8 to $9 range.

88 Fulton St., at Gold St. ✆ 212/587-8930. Mon–Fri 11am–9pm; Sat–Sun noon–9pm. Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Café Himalaya *TIBETAN* EAST VILLAGE This little mom and pop restaurant serves tasty Tibetan/Nepali meals. There's a slight resemblance to Indian and Chinese dishes, as you might imagine, but the flavoring is its own thing—soy, carrot, and ginger are major players. Veggie dinner entrees run from $5.99 to $6.99, and sautéed noodle

and meat dishes are $6.75 to $7.50. Things get even cheaper at lunch, where you can get a curry or dumplings or noodles for only $4.99. Lunch specials run Tuesday to Friday from 11:30am to 4pm. For cheap-date purposes it's BYOB, although seating is limited.

78 E. 1st St., btw. Ave. A and First Ave. ✆ 212/358-0160. Tues–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

The Kati Roll Company *INDIAN* MIDTOWN WEST These aren't your bland Midtown deli wraps. Here, flaky, flavorful paratha bread envelops grilled meat and veggies that pop with exotic spicing. On the downside, the rolls ($3.25–$5.75) fall somewhere between snack and meal (on the upside, there's a discount when you buy two). Bollywood posters amplify the authenticity of a small, well-used space.

49 W. 39th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/730-4280. www.thekatirollcompany.com. Mon–Thurs 11am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11am–5am; Sun noon–10pm. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave. Other location: *West Village*, 99 MacDougal St., btw. Bleecker and W. 3rd sts. ✆ 212/420-6517. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.; 1 to Houston St.

Kofoo *KOREAN* CHELSEA Where students congregate, cheap food cannot be far away. An F.I.T. clientele flocks to nearby Kofoo, for a wide selection of Korean delights. *Kim bop,* Korean sushi, comes in ten varieties, for $4.50 to $4.95. Korean rice classics are also served, including sliced-beef *bulgogi* and *bibim bop* for $6.95 each. Fresh, crisp kimchi on the side stands out, too. FINE PRINT There are just a couple of seats; most business is takeout.

334 Eighth Ave., btw. 26th and 27th sts. ✆ 212/675-5277. Mon–Sat 10:30am–10pm. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

Paris Sandwich *VIETNAMESE* CHINATOWN Fresh baguettes are the innovation here, cooked on site, and then transformed at the back station into hearty Vietnamese heroes ($3.75 for most). Although the *bánh mì* is better in nearby shops, the grilled pork is spectacular, caramelly meat sunk deep into the pores of the bread. Cheap fresh-roasted Vietnamese coffee, soups, noodles, and curries are also for sale.

113 Mott St., btw. Hester and Canal sts. ✆ 212/226-7221. Mon–Thurs 8am–8pm; Fri–Sun 9am–9pm. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.; B/D to Grand St.

Pho Grand *VIETNAMESE* CHINATOWN Pho Grand is a contender for the best Vietnamese food in the city, and it's just a little added bonus that it's also among the cheapest. Huge bowls of rich, complex *pho* (beef noodle soup) are only $5.25. Vermicelli noodle and rice

dishes come in under $6. Most entrees top out well before $10 and are routinely delicious. A lodge-style interior with wooden panels underscores the homey quality of the food.

277C Grand St., btw. Forsyth and Eldridge sts. ✆ **212/965-5366.** Daily 10:30am–10:30pm. Subway: B/D to Grand St.

Woorijip *KOREAN* MIDTOWN Korean delis are ubiquitous in New York, but most serve up bland, mainstream cafeteria fare. To find real Korean dishes, the natural destination is 32nd Street in Midtown, where a delicious by-the-pound deli is hidden among pricier Korean restaurants. Bulgogi, squid, tofu, jellyfish, Korean pancakes, and, of course, kimchi, can be found on the serve-yourself buffet line ($6.49 per pound). You can also get pre-made snacks and meals, like filling kimbap veggie rolls for under $5.

12 W. 32nd St., btw. Broadway and Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/244-1115.** Daily 24 hr. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.

3 Turning (to) Japanese, I Really Think So

The closest New York has to a "Japantown" can be found on 8th and 9th streets between 2nd and 3rd avenues, and it's all priced low to keep the crowds of NYU students. You'll find *izakaya* (Japanese bars with cheap food), plus noodle shops, cheap sushi, and strange pancakes. Here's my favorite East Village Spot and another in Midtown.

East Japanese Restaurant *JAPANESE* MIDTOWN EAST This sit-down spot was a New York pioneer in *yakitori,* or grilled skewers. The prices here are moderate to begin with, but hit them on the right night and they get downright cheap. Select skewers ($2 for the classic marinated chicken) go for 50% off on Tuesday nights from 5:30 to 10:30pm. Monday nights the discount goes to selected sushi and sashimi, Thursday nights to salmon.

210 E. 44th St., near Third Ave. ✆ **212/687-5075.** Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:45pm and 5:30–10:30pm; Sat–Sun noon–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm. Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to Grand Central. Other location: *Upper East Side,* 354 E. 66th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/734-5270.** Subway: F to 63rd St. *Gramercy,* 366 Third Ave., btw. 26th and 27th sts. ✆ **212/889-2326.** Subway: 6 to 28th St.

Otafuku *JAPANESE* EAST VILLAGE Ideal drunk food can be found at this tiny takeout in the East Village—though the sober will be

equally sated. The dishes are hot, flavorful, filling, and decidedly odd. The mainstays are *okonomiyaki,* a pizza-shaped pancake fried up with shredded cabbage, bonito flakes, and a choice of meat; and *takoyaki,* dumplings made of batter and octopus, topped with some of the above pancake fixin's. At $3 to $8, everything's cheap and large enough to share. *Yakisoba* (fried noodles with seafood) is only $6. FINE PRINT This is sidewalk food. The place is literally the size of a closet, and aside from a bench in front, there's no seating.

236 E. 9th St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ 212/353-8503. Mon–Thurs 1–10pm; Fri–Sat noon–1am; Sun noon–10pm. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

4 Fast Food Alternatives

NYC is unkind to huge restaurant chains. The cost of labor here favors family-run enterprises, and New Yorkers' finely honed taste buds run counter to the lowest common denominator flavors of the hinterland. Thankfully, for low-cost fast food, small franchises and one-off shops provide excellent alternatives to the golden arches and their ilk.

Carl's Steaks *CHEESESTEAKS* FINANCIAL DISTRICT City of Brotherly Love transplants have long looked down their noses at New York's feeble attempts at the cheesesteak. A slew of hopefuls have stepped up, but only Carl's delivers a sandwich with the potential to hold its own in South Philly. The shaved sirloin melts on the tongue, while taut hoagie rolls make the meal substantial. Choose American or provolone, but connoisseurs know Cheese Whiz is the only way to go. A steak sandwich alone is $6, with cheese $6.50; $2.25 for a side of fries.

79 Chambers St., btw. Broadway and Church St. ✆ 212/566-2828. www.carlssteaks.com. Mon–Wed 11am–midnight; Thurs 11am–1am; Fri–Sat 11am–4am; Sun noon–11pm. Subway: A/C or 1/2/3 to Chambers St.; R/W to City Hall. Other location: *Midtown,* 507 Third Ave., at 34th St. ✆ 212/696-5336. Subway: 6 to 33rd St.

L & L Hawaiian Barbecue *HAWAIIAN* FINANCIAL DISTRICT For most New Yorkers, the *katsus, loco mocos,* and *lau lau* combos here will be unfamiliar. The tangy Asian-inflected flavors make quick converts, however. Plates come with creamy macaroni salad and scooped rice. Short ribs in black pepper sauce are $6.69; a mixed barbecue combo that could feed a family for a week is $8.99. (Manhattan is blessed with the only version of this franchise east of Texas.)

64 Fulton St., btw. Cliff and Gold sts. ✆ **212/577-8888.** www.hawaiianbarbecue.com. Mon–Fri 10:30am–11pm; Sat–Sun 11am–11pm. Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Tuck Shop *AUSTRALIAN* EAST VILLAGE Tuck shop is Australian for "canteen," and this neat mess hall specializes in quick and casual pies. Savory, flaky crusts hold veggies, beef, or a chicken version with leeks and diced ham. At $5, they're not huge, but they're hearty and filling all the same. The $3 vegetarian sausage roll is a mash of chickpea and mushrooms with an addictive sour taste.

68 E. 1st St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/979-5200.** www.tuckshopnyc.com. Mon–Wed 8am–midnight; Thurs 8am–2am; Fri–Sat 8am–5am; Sun 8am–10pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Yonah Schimmel *KNISHES* LOWER EAST SIDE The knish is a New York classic and can be found everywhere from delis to hot dog stands, but for the best in gut bombs you have to go to the source, the Lower East Side. Yonah Schimmel offers up flavors traditional (potato, mushroom, kasha) and sacrilegious (pizza), cooked with a generations-old recipe. For $2.75, it's hard to get more filled up. The rich cheese versions are less cost conscious ($3.25), but equally delicious.

137 E. Houston St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/477-2858.** www.yonahschimmel.com. Mon–Thurs 9am–7pm; Fri–Sun 9am–11pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

5 Falafel Good

I've never understood how a little ball of shredded chickpea can come out tasting so meaty and delicious. Somehow falafel satisfies in a way other vegetables can't. The deep-frying probably doesn't hurt any. As far as blessings to count in New York City, ready falafel availability is right up there with the Met and Central Park.

Bereket Turkish Kebob House *TURKISH* LOWER EAST SIDE The guys working here clearly never got the memo that fast food doesn't require four-star taste. The $3.50 falafel is crispy, served up in a flavorful pita with farm-fresh tomatoes and lettuce. As good as the falafel is, the rest of the menu is even better. My own personal addiction is the adana kabob, a spicy blend of lamb and beef, available as a $6 pita sandwich.

187 E. Houston St., at Orchard St. ✆ **212/475-7700.** Daily 24 hr. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Mamoun's *MIDDLE EASTERN/FALAFEL* WEST VILLAGE This NYU favorite opened in 1971 and they've been so busy serving up Middle Eastern delicacies that they haven't had the chance to revise their prices much. At $2.95, the falafel sandwich here is one of the city's best buys. The balls are small, dense, and packed with nutty flavor. Other veggie pitas, like the baba ghanouj, are also $2.95. The chicken kabob, a mix of savory, seared meat and lightly sweet tahini, is a highlight of the $4 meat sandwiches. Several competitors have hung their shingles on the block, but Mamoun's is still the best. Seating is limited; in nice weather Washington Square Park serves as Mamoun's back garden.

119 MacDougal St., btw. Minetta Lane and W. 3rd St. ✆ 212/674-8685. www.mamounsfalafel.com. Daily 11am–5am. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St. Other location: *East Village,* 22 St. Marks Place, btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/387-7747.** Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Rainbow Falafel & Shawarma *SYRIAN/FALAFEL* UNION SQUARE Rainbow has the best-tasting falafel in the city. Marinated onions liven up the already-flavorful falafel balls. The other Syrian specialties—shawarmas and kabobs, in particular—are just as good. FINE PRINT It's all take-away, but nearby Union Square's benches and tables invite picnicking.

26 E. 17th St., btw. Broadway and Fifth Ave. ✆ 212/691-8641. Mon–Fri 11am–6pm. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Taim *ISRAELI/FALAFEL* WEST VILLAGE Though Taim takes a gourmet approach to its Middle Eastern cooking, it's barely reflected in the prices. Falafel is the specialty here, balled into small and taut bites. The options are varied: green, with mint, parsley, and cilantro; roasted red pepper; and *harissa,* a Tunisian version spiced up with paprika and garlic. A sandwich is $5 and comes dressed with tahini and homemade hummus. Everything is made fresh daily, more than justifying this carryout's name (Hebrew for "delicious"). FINE PRINT Seating is limited.

222 Waverly Place, btw. Perry and W. 11th sts. ✆ 212/691-1287. www.taimnyc.com. Daily 11am–10pm. Subway: 1/2/3 to 14th St.

6 Vegetarian

For years, frequenters of NYC's vegetarian restaurants could be forgiven for thinking they might as well all be named "Food Haters" for their bland and limited cuisine. The next generation of meatless purveyors has put a stop to all that, however. Vegetarians can achieve

culinary satisfaction just as easily as their carnivorous brethren, and they don't have to pay through the nose to do it.

Chennai Garden *INDIAN* MURRAY HILL I am a fascist about Downtown being better at all things, but when it comes to Indian, Curry Hill is miles beyond the East Village's Curry Row. Chennai Garden may be the city's best, with an extensive menu of Southern Indian delights. Vegetarians can relax, as the long list of *dosai, utthappam,* and curries doesn't contain a scrap of meat. Entrees are under $10, and portions are substantial. Despite the prices, decent lighting and mint-colored walls make for a date-suitable atmosphere. FINE PRINT The weekday lunch buffet is a steal at $6.95.

129 E. 27th St., btw. Park and Lexington aves. ✆ 212/689-1999. Mon–Fri buffet 11:30–3pm, dinner 5pm–10pm; Sat–Sun noon–10pm.

Hummus Place *MIDDLE EASTERN* WEST VILLAGE New York is known for diner menus packed with just about every dish and combination imagined by humanity. There's something nice, however, about a place that only does one thing, especially when they do it so damn well. Imported white tahini is the key ingredient to the rich hummus served here. For only $5.95 you can have your choice of three versions, plain, with fava bean stew and egg, or with whole chickpeas. Hummus haters are limited to *shakshuka,* a hearty Israeli tomato stew, for $6.95.

99 MacDougal St., btw. Carmine and Bleecker sts. ✆ 212/533-3089. Sun–Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11am–2am. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.; 1 to Houston St. Other locations: *East Village*, 109 St. Marks Place, btw. First Ave. and Ave. A. ✆ 212/529-9198. Subway: L to First Ave. *Upper West Side*, 305 Amsterdam Ave., btw. 74th and 75th sts. ✆ 212/799-3335. *West Village*, 71 Seventh Ave. S., btw. Bleecker and Commerce sts. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.; A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.

Pukk *THAI* EAST VILLAGE Don't be intimidated by the overdesigned interior of this narrow restaurant. The food here transcends the trends to deliver inventive meat-free soups, curries, and tofus. Among the fake flesh, duck is the stand-out. Entrees and noodle dishes start at $7 (the spicy eggplant tofu comes in a huge, delicious portion), and two-course lunches are $6.

71 First Ave., btw. 4th and 5th sts. ✆ 212/253-2741. www.pukknyc.com. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Best Food Inside a Jewelry Shop (Tie)

Bánh Mì Saigon Bakery *VIETNAMESE* CHINATOWN If you ask me, bánh mì sandwiches are up there with penicillin as far as human achievements go. Layers of cilantro, carrot, cucumber, and a creamy dressing top a crusty baguette. Beyond the bread, French influence can also be found in the thinly sliced pâté that accompanies crumbled pork sausage in the classic version ($3.75 here). This purveyor's tiny counter in the back of a jewelry shop reinforces a sensation that anything this delicious must be illegal. 138-01 Mott St., btw. Grand and Hester sts. ✆ **212/941-1541.** Subway: B/D to Grand St.; J/M/Z to Bowery. Closed Mon.

Taam-Tov *BUKHARAN* MIDTOWN This upstairs lunchroom, hidden on a staircase leading to watch-repairers and jewelry polishers, is packed with Jewish expats chatting away over the comfort food of Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Skewered kabobs are $3.49 each, a perfect match for thick-cut french fries. House specialties run a little more; the green-tinted bakhsh, a hearty cilantro pilaf, comes in at $6.99. 41 W. 47th St., 3rd floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/768-8001.** www.nytaamtov.com. Mon–Thurs 10am–5pm; Fri 10am to 2 hr. before shabbos. Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center.

Punjab *INDIAN* EAST VILLAGE Local hipsters have discovered this Sikh taxi stand, which serves its dual constituencies with equal cordiality. Choose from six daily veggie entrees, which are then microwaved and served over rice. Have two on a small plate for $3, or splurge for three over a big plate for $5. The food is fresh and tasty, and you can throw in two samosas for only $2 more.

114 E. 1st St., btw. First Ave. and Ave. A. ✆ **212/533-9048.** Daily 24 hr. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Tiengarden *VEGETARIAN* LOWER EAST SIDE A mix of pencil-thin model types and local hard-core vegans frequent this quirky little storefront for some of the healthiest food around. The Chinese-inspired menu is prepared without dairy, onion, or garlic, but somehow manages to be packed with flavor. Prices have gone up some,

Grand Prix Fixe

NYC's restaurant weeks are one way New Yorkers on budgets can graze on grub they normally couldn't afford. A couple of times a year, participating chuck wagons set up special multi-course menus. At $25 for lunch and $35 for dinner, they're hardly charitable giveaways, however. Prix fixe is French for fixed price, and it's our year-round version of restaurant week. Much of the Theater District will offer limited-option, three-course meals in the $20 to $25 range, so long as you order ahead of the local curtain calls. (They'd call these "early bird specials," if not for the connotations of Florida retirement communities.) Again, they're not super-cheap, but they do reflect discount pricing. Those aside, New York is not without a couple of fixed-price steals.

Dallas BBQ *BARBECUE* CHELSEA This local chain won't win any prizes for authenticity, but they do a decent take on comfort food. Ribs, pulled pork, and beef brisket highlight the menu. For cheapskates, the early bird special is not to be missed—two full meals for $9.99. You'll get double soups, double servings of rotisserie chicken, cornbread, and a choice of potatoes or rice. It's as filling as New York gets for less than $5. FINE PRINT Available weekdays from 11am to noon, and again from 2 to 6pm; weekends 11am to 5pm. Dine-in only. 261 Eighth Ave., at 23rd St. ✆ **212/462-0001.** www.dallasbbq.com.

but it's still cheap for such wholesome offerings—noodle dishes start at $8, oversized soups at $7, and entrees hover around $10. I could eat the Spicy Eggplant or Seitan Innovation every day of the week and not get bored. (And see if you're not filled with a subtle sense of well-being when you leave.)

170 Allen St., btw. Stanton and Rivington sts. ✆ **212/388-1364.** Mon–Fri 4–11pm; Sat–Sun noon–11pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

7 Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens

Manhattan's gentrification has its new gentry looking fondly back toward comfort food as a counterbalance to over-burnished surfaces. As with the recent comebacks of barbecue and burgers, fried chicken

Sun–Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11am–1am. Subway: C/E to 23rd St. Other locations: *Upper East Side,* 1265 Third Ave., btw. 73rd and 74th sts. ✆ **212/772-9393.** Subway: 6 to 77th St. *Upper West Side,* 27 W. 72nd St., near Central Park W. ✆ **212/873-2004.** Subway: B/C to 72nd St. *Washington Heights,* 3956 Broadway, at 166th St. ✆ **212/568-3700.** Subway: A/C/1 to 168th St. *East Village,* 132 Second Ave., at St. Marks Place. ✆ **212/777-5574.** Subway: 6 to Astor Place. *Times Square,* 241 W. 42nd St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/221-9000.** Subway: N/Q/R/Q/1/2/3/7 to Times Sq.; A/C/E to 42nd St./Port Authority.

Primitivo Osteria *ITALIAN* CHELSEA Harking back to Italian *osterias,* or taverns, this sociable neighborhood joint is conscientious about making all its meals affordable. Prix-fixe lunches start at $8.95, offering a choice of four different pastas on top of soup or salad and a drink (weekdays 11:30am–4pm). Weekend brunches, with double bloody marys, screwdrivers, or all-you-can-drink mimosas, start at $14.95. Despite the rock-bottom pricing, the Southern Italian cuisine here is fresh and well prepared. 202 W. 14th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/255-2060.** www.primitivorestaurant.com. Sun–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

is storming the city, much of it with prices reminiscent of an older Gotham incarnation.

Birdies *CHICKEN* EAST VILLAGE "Grandma's Chicken for the People" is some pretty tasty populism. Although the baked chicken is no great shakes, other organic bird options (a light barbecue jerk, lemon pepper, and crunchy fried) are packed with flavor. Three-piece sets are $6, and a combo with two pieces, a soul-food side, and a soda is $7.50. FINE PRINT The space is homey, but the seating is limited.

149 First Ave., btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **212/529-2512.** Daily 11:30am–11pm. Subway: L to First Ave.; 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Piece of Chicken *CHICKEN* CLINTON Alberta Wright is a Charleston, South Carolina, transplant who built her reputation with the upscale soul food of her previous restaurant, Jezebel. Her follow-up project is decidedly downscale—just a kitchen with a window—but the results are every bit as impressive. Just $1 gets you a piece of tender, golden-fried chicken (or two wings). Another buck buys you a series of sides (collard greens, black-eyed peas, fries). FINE PRINT There's no seating, as rent is the most expensive ingredient in the New York–restaurant recipe.

362 W. 45th St., near Ninth Ave. ✆ **212/582-5973.** Mon–Sat noon–10pm. Subway: A/C/E/7 to Port Authority.

Tebaya *CHICKEN WINGS* CHELSEA All the way from Nagoya, Japan, comes this recipe for extraordinary chicken wings. I had no idea wings could taste this good. City of Buffalo, hang your head in shame. The chicken here is double fried to burn off the fat, and then basted in a savory garlic sauce. Eight pieces are $5.50. For your next Super Bowl party, volume discounts bring the price of each wing as low as 65¢. Japanese fast food items like teriyaki chicken sandwiches and fried potato cakes fill up the rest of the menu. FINE PRINT Seating is limited.

144 W. 19th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/924-3335.** www.goojapan.com/tebaya/index.htm. Mon–Fri 11:30am–11:30pm; Sat noon–11pm. Subway: 1 to 18th St.

8 Healthy

When $1.50 hotdogs beckon, it can be hard for dirt cheap eaters to remember to show their bodies a little occasional respect. If organic groceries were any example, it would seem that healthy eating is plain out of reach for the little guy. Luckily, NYC has a couple of spots that will add years to your life without draining your wallet.

Dojo *HEALTH/JAPANESE* WEST VILLAGE As any NYU student will tell you, the cheapest sit-down meals can be found at Dojo. The menu is Japanese-inspired, but the restaurant serves a full array of healthy-ish food for almost token fees. A soy burger goes for $2.75, salads for $3.50 to $5.25, and a big plate of veggie don noodles is $5.25.

14 W. 4th St., btw. Broadway and Mercer St. ✆ **212/505-8934.** Mon–Thurs, Sun 11am–1am; Fri–Sat 11am–2am. Subway: B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette; 6 to Bleecker St.

The Pump Energy Food *HEALTH* MIDTOWN WEST A Garment District find, Pump cooks everything to order and eschews salt, butter, frying, preservatives, and other body-unfriendly shortcuts to taste. The result of all this effort is fresh and healthy food. For $5.85 you can get a grilled lemon chicken or turkey burger stuffed in a pita. A delicious baked falafel salad, served over crisp lettuce, with tomato and cukes, is only $6.15. And when you're done you won't feel all logy.

112 W. 38th St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Broadway. ✆ **212/764-2100.** www.thepumpenergyfood.com. Mon–Fri 7:30am–9pm. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq. Other locations: *Midtown*, 40 W. 55th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/246-6844.** Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave./53rd St.; F to 57th St. *Midtown*, 805 Third Ave., at 50th St. ✆ **212/421-3055.** Subway: 6 to 51st St.; E/V to Lexington Ave./53rd St. *Midtown*, 275 Madison Ave., at 40th St. ✆ **212/697-7867.** Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to Grand Central. *Gramercy*, 31 E. 21st St., btw. Park Ave. and Broadway. ✆ **212/253-7676.** Subway: N/R/W or 6 to 23rd St.

9 Latino

After Asian, the best bet for cheap eating is Latino food. Our Spanish-speaking neighbors to the south (and east, when you count the Caribbean) have a surprisingly varied cuisine, and some great examples of it can be found here in El Norte.

Caracas Arepa Bar *VENEZUELAN* EAST VILLAGE An arepa is a Venezuelan improvement on bread, with flavorful corn standing in for wheat flour. The small arepa sandwiches at this East Village shop start at $4.25 with plain white cheese and top out around $7. The selection is varied for such a small place, with ingredients changing with the seasons.

91 E. 7th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/228-5062.** www.caracasarepabar.com. Mon–Fri 5:30–10:30pm; Sat noon–10:30pm; Sun noon–9:30pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Cubana Café *CUBAN* SOHO In its quick trip to becoming New York's outdoor answer to the Mall of America, SoHo has managed to squeeze out most of its low-rent neighbors. At this quaint Cuban boutique restaurant, however, plenty of entrees remain under $9. Spicy huevos rancheros are only $6 and are served all day, along with a host of other breakfast items. A hearty Cuban sandwich is $7.50. Strong flavors help to compensate for portions that are on the small side.

110 Thompson St., btw. Prince and Spring sts. ✆ **212/966-5366.** Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight. Subway: C/E to Spring St.

Empanada Mama *LATINO* CLINTON This Queens transplant is a patty pro, offering up over two dozen takes on this humble Latin pocket. I prefer the tried and true to exotics like the Polish (kielbasa and sauerkraut) or the Elvis (peanut butter and bananas.) Wheat-wrapped rascals average $2.50, and triangular corn flour versions are $2.25. Beef in the latter form is a can't miss. A pleasant, colorful shop rounds out the eating experience.

763 Ninth Ave., btw. 51st and 52nd sts. ✆ **212/698-9008.** Daily 11am–11:30pm. Subway: C/E to 50th St.

La Taza de Oro *PUERTO RICAN* CHELSEA The daily specials at this classic make it easy to get filled up for under $7.75. My favorites are bacalao (stewed codfish), *ropa vieja* ("old clothes"—a stew made with shredded beef), and roast chicken, which come in around $8 each, including knock-out rice and beans.

96 Eighth Ave., btw. 14th and 15th sts. ✆ **212/243-9946.** Mon–Sat 6am–10:30pm. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Margon *CUBAN* MIDTOWN WEST This diner's delicious Caribbean fare, low prices, and central location keep it packed with Midtown lunchers. Order a Cuban sandwich up front ($5.50), or choose from to-stay steam-table selections in the middle and to-go from the line in back. Chicken fricassee is a top seller, served with rice and beans and just $7.75 for a plate.

136 W. 46th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/354-5013.** Mon–Fri 6am–4:45pm; Sat 7am–2:30pm. Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; N/R/W to 49th St.

Noche Mexicana *MEXICAN* UPPER WEST SIDE Authentic Mexican food has long been lacking in the New York gastronomic scene, but mom and pop places like this are raising standards. You can take your choice of savory red or green mole atop enchilada platters ($8.50), triple orders of tamales ($6), or corn-tortilla chicken chilaquiles ($8.50). Tacos are excellent ($2.50 for most) and a glass of wine on the side is but $4.50.

852 Amsterdam Ave., btw. 101st and 102nd sts. ✆ **212/662-6900.** www.nochemexicana.com. Sun–Thurs 10am–11pm; Fri–Sat 10am–midnight. Subway: 1 to 103rd St.

Tehuitzingo Mexican Deli *MEXICAN* CLINTON A ramshackle counter area that could be a rest stop on a Mexican highway is the

Hot Dog Days

Papayas and hot dogs aren't an intuitive combination, but the city hosts a heated rivalry over the best fruit and meat combos. Skeptics may argue that the difference between any two tube steaks is academic, but connoisseurs can parse subtle distinctions in density, texture, and taste. **Papaya King** was the original, but time has not been kind to this chain. Knockoff Papaya Dog holds down the middle of the pack, leaving **Gray's Papaya** as New York's top dog. The meat is flavorful, finished with a light char, and kept fresh thanks to quickly moving queues. Long live the "recession special"—as long as Gray's continues to offer two hot dogs and a drink for $3.50. FINE PRINT Standing room only here. 2090 Broadway, at 72nd St. ✆ **212/799-0243.** www.grayspapaya.com. Daily 24 hr. Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St. Other locations: *West Village,* 402 Sixth Ave., at 8th St. ✆ **212/260-3532.** Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St. *Midtown,* 539 Eighth Ave., at 37th St. ✆ **212/904-1588.** Subway: A/C/E to 34th St.

For a new school take on the New York classic, the East Village's **Crif Dogs** is the place to go. Here $6.50 will net you dinner and a drink (two New Yorker dogs and an ice-cold Pabst Blue Ribbon). The very high end is represented by the Tsunami—a bacon-wrapped, deep-fried Crif Dog with teriyaki sauce, pineapple, and scallions. I'd lay short odds that whoever came up with that delicious combo wasn't sober. 113 St. Marks Place, btw. First Ave. and Ave. A. ✆ **212/614-2728.** Daily noon–midnight, till 2am Thurs, till 4am Fri–Sat. Subway: 6 to Astor Place.

setting for this clandestine *taquería.* Über-authentic tacos are $2 to $2.50, generously piled with meat, from juicy pork carnitas to slow-cooked *lengua* to succulent chicken. Equally good are the Mexican sandwiches ($5), *tortas,* which are meals unto themselves. You can also grab a beer from one of the deli refrigerators.

695 Tenth Ave., btw. 47th and 48th sts. ✆ **212/397-5956.** Daily 8am–11:30pm. Subway: C/E to 50th St.

Zaragoza *MEXICAN* EAST VILLAGE A renowned late-night fortification stop, this rundown little deli's food tastes just as good *before* a four-hour East Village bender. There's no menu, but point out which of the handful of stewed meats you'd like at the counter (enchilada with hints of pineapple, roast pork, chipotle chicken) and they'll stuff it in a double corn tortilla and top it with an addictive tomatillo sauce. This is my favorite taco in NYC and it's only $2.

215 Ave. A, btw. 13th and 14th sts. ✆ **212/780-9204.** Sun–Thurs 8am–11pm; Fri–Sat 8am–4am. Subway: L to First Ave.

10 Eastern European

With the demise of Kiev, Leshko's, and Alice's, New York's Eastern European dining scene is much diminished. A couple of holdovers, however, still serve the hearty delights of the Old World. There's also some new blood bringing in flavors most New Yorkers haven't experienced yet.

Djerdan Burek *BALKAN* MIDTOWN WEST Burek slices haven't made much of a dent in pizza's supremacy in New York, but the Balkan treat is worth seeking out. A burek is flaky dough stuffed with meat, cheese, or spinach, and cooked up into a hubcap-sized pie. You can get a huge piece for only $4.95. (The restaurant is newly remodeled and has dispensed with its cafeteria service, but sit-down meals still average around $11.)

221 W. 38th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/921-1183.** Mon–Sat 11am–10pm; Sun noon–8pm. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to Penn Station.

Little Poland *DINER/POLISH* EAST VILLAGE The old-time Eastern European flavor of the East Village is fading fast, but fortunately this greasy-spoon stalwart is still hanging on. Some dozen hearty soups are less than $4 a bowl, and pierogi are $7.25 for eight. For dinner, a breaded pork chop bigger than a serving plate is $9.25, and if you're in before noon you can get a full array of breakfast specials (starting with two eggs, potatoes, toast, and coffee for $3.75). If you can't fill your stomach here for less than $10, consult your physician.

200 Second Ave., btw. 12th and 13th sts. ✆ **212/777-9728.** Daily 7am–11pm. Subway: L to First or Third Ave.

11 Two All-Beef Patties, Special Sauce, Lettuce, Cheese . . .

One of New York's most appealing recent trends is the return of the burger. Ground beef seemed to be an afterthought at all but the most blue collar of taverns. The last couple of years, however, have seen the arrival of fast food spots focused purely on the patty. When the upstarts are added to the long-time classics, New York looks well on its way to being a paradise in cheeseburgers.

Big Nick's Burger Joint/Pizza Joint *AMERICAN/BURGERS* UPPER WEST SIDE When your menu serves every dish ever thought of, you're bound to have a few items that seem a little overpriced. For the most part, though, this Upper West Side joint has great values on big portions. The options are endless—with burgers alone, there are over three dozen choices. Prices start at $5.75 and go to $8.50 for the heart-unfriendly hollandaise and Canadian bacon Benedict burger. A profusion of blue-plate lunch specials are available for $7.25.

2175 Broadway, at 77th St. ✆ 212/362-9238. www.bignicksnyc.com. Daily 24 hr. Subway: 1 to 79th St.

The Burger Joint at the Parker Meridian *AMERICAN/BURGERS* MIDTOWN WEST One of the city's best burgers hides behind curtains inside the lobby of a fancy Midtown west hotel. The Burger Joint is as unpretentious and inexpensive as its name, and the burger is a delicious instant classic, juicy and not too greasy. Buy one for $7, add 50¢ for cheese. FINE PRINT Though the entrance is hidden (look for the neon arrow by the check-in desk), the local businessfolk and tourist trade have discovered the place, and it's mobbed at lunch.

118 W. 57th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/245-5000. www.parkermeridien.com/eat4.php. Sun-Thurs 11:30am-11:30pm; Fri-Sat 11:30pm-midnight. Subway: N/R/Q/W or F to 57th St.

Corner Bistro *AMERICAN/BURGERS* WEST VILLAGE Inside this dark, worn West Village bar you'll find one of the best burgers in the city. The no-frills regular is $5.75, while $6.75 adds decadent layers of cheese, bacon, and onions. This place is a well-guarded local secret, known only to you and the 10,000 other people waiting beside you at the bar. (Weekday afternoons are the least-crowded times.)

331 W. 4th St., btw. Jane St. and Eighth Ave. ✆ **212/242-9502.** www.cornerbistro.ypguides.net. Mon–Sat 11:30am–4am; Sun noon–4am. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Royale *BURGERS* EAST VILLAGE Though it's short on history (and the blaring TVs undermine its character), this bar's deft burger execution reflects the ambitions of a place targeting classic status. Big patties full of Black Angus flavor rest on brioche buns ($5), cooked to order and served fresh. Add $3 for a heap of fries on the side. In the warmer months, the small garden in back makes for a relaxed scene.

157 Ave. C, btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **212/254-6600.** Sun–Thurs 4pm–1am; Fri–Sat 4pm–4am. Subway: L to First Ave.

12 Cheap Dates

A welcome recent trend in Gotham dining is the invasion of the upscale-ish Asian restaurant. A profusion of new places combine elegant Asian design, friendly staffs, flavorful food, and reasonable prices. The food is so good, the person across the table won't notice how little you've spent.

Galanga *THAI* WEST VILLAGE Although this place scores high style points with its refined decor, there's no tradeoff in substance. Witness good-size portions, exquisite seasoning, and more authenticity than one usually finds this side of distant boroughs. Curries and wok concoctions start at $9, and noodles are even less. I have difficulty getting the tangy taste of the charcoal beef salad ($9) out of my head. The weekday lunch special comes with soup or salad and starts at $6.95.

149 W. 4th St., btw. MacDougal St. and Sixth Ave. ✆ **212/228-4267.** Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11:30pm; Sun 11:30am–10:30pm. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.

Kasadela *JAPANESE* EAST VILLAGE New York has its share of *izakaya,* the Japanese taverns that split the difference between sake bars and restaurants. The ones on St. Marks Place pack the crowds in, but this Alphabet City stop is long on charm and never overrun. Exposed brick and low light make for a romantic atmosphere as diners savor beef skewers, sautéed burdock root, and fried oysters. Though the drinks aren't cheap, the small plates are affordable—chicken wings should not be missed ($7.95 for eight).

647 E. 11th St., btw. aves. B and C. ✆ **212/777-1582.** www.kasadela.com. Tues–Thurs, Sun 5:30pm–12:30am; Fri–Sat 5:30pm–1:30am. Subway: L to First Ave.

Land *THAI* UPPER WEST SIDE Mercer Kitchen alum David Bank presents the flavors of his native Bangkok inside the brick, tin, and mesh confines of this Uptown charmer. Seared mains from the wok top out at $11, while noodle dishes hover in the $9 to $10 range. The prix-fixe lunch, which includes papaya salad and basil and beef, proffers two courses for $8. FINE PRINT Small place plus rabid popularity equals potentially long waits.

480 Amsterdam Ave., btw. 81st and 82nd sts. ✆ **212/501-8121.** www.landthaikitchen.com. Sun–Thurs noon–10:45pm; Fri–Sat noon–11pm. Subway: 1 to 79th St.; B/C to 81st St. Other location: *Upper East Side*, 1565 Second Ave., btw. 81st and 82nd sts. ✆ **212/439-1847.** Subway: 6 to 77th St.

Lovely Day *JAPANESE/THAI* NOLITA This little cafe is as hip as affordable gets. The menu features creative takes on Thai and Japanese dishes, with noodles running in the $7.50 to $8.50 range. A plate of meat and pineapple fried rice is only $6.75. The salmon dinner, served with greens and sweet potato mash, is a bargain at $9.50. The seasonings are a little on the sweet side, but the fun, bustling room quickly puts a diner in a forgiving mood.

196 Elizabeth St., btw. Prince and Spring sts. ✆ **212/925-3310.** Daily noon–11pm. Subway: 6 to Spring St.

Mooncake *PAN-ASIAN* SOHO This cheerful little family-run shop serves up fresh food with Asian accents. Portions are decent for such small prices. Seven dollars covers a pork chop sandwich with mango chutney, or a steak and pepper sandwich. For less than $2 more you can get a big salad bowl with lemongrass shrimp and Vietnamese-style vermicelli noodles. The biggest seller here is the miso-glazed salmon, a plate of which is a mere $8.80.

28 Watts St., near Sixth Ave. ✆ **212/219-8888.** Mon–Sat 11am–11pm. Subway: A/C/E to Canal St. Other location: *Midtown West*, 263 W. 30th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/268-2888.** Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to Penn Station.

Peep *THAI* SOHO Peep proves that an upscale, modern decor and central location don't require exorbitant prices. Dinners are reasonable ($9 pad thai, $10 meat and tofu entrees, $11 for shrimp), though the real deal comes at lunch. For $7 to $8 you get an appetizer and an entree, with a large selection of Thai favorites to pick through. Presentation is as attractive as the crowd. Though the neighborhood's discovered this place, it's usually not so crowded that you can't get a seat.

177 Prince St., btw. Sullivan and Thompson sts. ✆ **212/254-PEEP** [7337]. www.peepsoho.net. Sun–Thurs 11am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11am–1am. Subway: C/E to Spring St.

13 BYOB, Baby!

Beyond the cheap eats above, savvy daters can take advantage of Bring Your Own Booze policies. Most every establishment on **Curry Row** (6th St., btw. 1st and 2nd aves.) in the East Village will try to wave you in if you're toting a bottle (or perhaps a sixer from Dowel Quality Products; p. 212). For wine stores, see the selections in "Free Wine Tastings" (p. 133)—pricewise, it's hard to beat Astor Wines (p. 133) and Trader Joe's (p. 213).

Angelica Kitchen *VEGETARIAN* EAST VILLAGE Impress the militant vegan in your life with dinner at this creative East Village spot, which retains its original '70s crunchy charm.

300 E. 12th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/228-2909.** www.angelicakitchen.com. Entrees $8–$14.75. No corkage fee. Subway: L to First Ave.

Eat-Pisode *THAI* LOWER EAST SIDE With liquor licenses scarce in these here parts, new Thai places like Jeeb and Sticky Rice invite you to BYO. My favorite of the bunch is Eat-Pisode, which balances authenticity and creativity in a stylish little space.

123 Ludlow St., btw. Rivington and Delancey sts. ✆ **212/677-7624.** www.eat-pisode.com. Entrees $9.95–$18.95. No corkage fee. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Elyssa Dido *NORTH AFRICAN/MEDITERRANEAN* LOWER EAST SIDE Odds are you're not burned out on Tunisian food, a flavorful blend of North African and Mediterranean influences. Experience it here in an intimate, low-lit room.

85 Orchard St., btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ **212/991-9880.** www.elyssadido.com. Entrees $12–$18. $7 corkage fee. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Ivo & Lulu *FRENCH/CARIBBEAN* SOHO This is my favorite BYOB splurge, a French/Caribbean-inflected restaurant with a seasonally changing menu. It's the least expensive fine dining you'll find in NYC. Offerings of duck leg with a spicy mango topping and wild boar sausage with blueberry sauce are perennial favorites; other gamier meats and unusual pairings can also be found. Portions are not huge, but it's all well crafted.

558 Broome St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Varick St. ✆ **212/226-4399.** Entrees $13–$14. No corkage fee. Subway: C/E to Spring St.; 1 to Canal St.

Nook *AMERICAN* MIDTOWN WEST There's no irony in this name, with tables shoehorned into a cramped space. Fortunately the crowd is friendly, happy to be dining on hearty roast chicken and peppercorn steak.

746 Ninth Ave., btw. 50th and 51st sts. ✆ **212/247-5500.** Entrees $10–$18. No corkage fee. Subway: C/E to 50th St.

Tartine *FRENCH* WEST VILLAGE Shade trees and an inevitable line adorn this tiny Village cafe, which serves up *croque monsieurs* at its popular brunch, plus tasty namesake tartes.

253 W. 11th St., at W. 4th St. ✆ **212/229-2611.** Entrees $15.95–$21, cafe items $8.25–$8.95. No corkage fee. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

Wondee Siam *THAI* MIDTOWN WEST Hot Thai curries headline the offerings at this long-running spot, which has spawned a handful of popular offshoots. To enjoy the pleasures of BYOB, stick with the original.

792 Ninth Ave., btw. 52nd and 53rd sts. ✆ **212/459-9057.** Entrees $7.50–$18.95. No corkage fee; plastic cups for wine, so you might prefer beer. Subway: C/E to 50th St.; B/D/E to Seventh Ave.

Zen Palate *ASIAN FUSION* MIDTOWN WEST Although the dishes can get a little too clever (Tex-Mex Moo Shu?), this crowded crowd-pleaser generally delivers on its promise of fresh, all-vegetarian, Asian-inflected delights.

663 Ninth Ave., at 46th St. ✆ **212/582-1669.** www.zenpalate.com. Entrees $9.50–$11.95, noodle dishes $8.50–$8.95. No corkage fee. Subway: C/E to 50th St.

14 Bagel Hounds

When you're out and about in the city and need some cheap filler, the disc that makes New York is the carb to go to. New York is the only place on Earth that knows how to make a decent firm-on-the-outside, chewy-on-the-inside "real" bagel. Every moment you spend not eating one is a wasted opportunity.

Absolute Bagel UPPER WEST SIDE The bagels at this Upper West Side shop are absolutely fabulous. They're a little too puffy to be traditional, but the extra air doesn't hinder the taste. For $1.95 you get a

bagel loaded with cream cheese. Bagel pudding may sound horrific, but it's actually delicious, syrupy, and enhanced with raisins and cinnamon; $2 buys a big block of it.

2708 Broadway, btw. 107th and 108th sts. ✆ **212/932-2105.** Daily 6am–9pm. Subway: 1 to 110th St.

David Bagel GRAMERCY Fresh hot bagels usually fill the racks of this Gramercy bagelry. For $2.10, get a big, chewy bagel slathered with cream cheese.

331 First Ave., btw. 19th and 20th sts. ✆ **212/780-2308.** Daily 6am–8:30pm. Subway: L to First Ave. Other location: *East Village*, 228 First Ave., btw. 13th and 14th sts. ✆ **212/533-8766.** Subway: L to First Ave.

Ess-A-Bagel GRAMERCY The huge bagels here won't win any points with purists, but they make an already good deal even better at $1, or $2.25 with a surplus helping of cream cheese. The bustling full-service shop has several tables for your savoring pleasure.

359 First Ave., at 21st St. ✆ **212/260-2252.** www.ess-a-bagel.com. Mon–Fri 6:30am to around 8:30pm; Sat–Sun 7am–5pm. Subway: 6 to 23rd St. Other location: *Midtown East*, 831 Third Ave., btw. 50th and 51st sts. ✆ **212/980-1010.** Subway: 6 to 51st St.

Kossar's Bialys LOWER EAST SIDE It's no surprise that the best bagel in New York comes from the Lower East Side. Kossar's serves perfect-size, perfect-textured bagels. The everything version is unparalleled at $1, although it's DIY for toppings from the fridge ($2.75 buys two bagels' worth of whipped kosher cream cheese). The bialys are made with similar dough and flavored with onions, but lack the trademark center hole; 90¢ each. Everything is baked fresh 24/6, limited counter seating available.

367 Grand St., btw. Essex and Norfolk sts. ✆ **212/473-4810.** www.kossarsbialys.com. Mon–Thurs, Sun 6am–8pm; Fri 6am–2pm; closed Jewish holidays. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

15 Slices of Heaven

The most famous pizzas in the city come from restaurants that pride themselves on selling by the pie only. All fine and good, except when you're looking for a quick and inexpensive meal, and you're not about to put seven surplus pieces in the fridge. It's a good thing that by-the-slice 'za can be found just about every ten paces in NYC. And when you tire of the classic slice, there's a bevy of off-kilter alternatives.

Koronet *PIZZA* UPPER WEST SIDE Extra value is what you get when you buy one of the ludicrously large slices at this Columbia U favorite. For $3 you get enough pizza to feed a mid-size village. The pizza is no more than decent, though it becomes absolutely perfect in the wee, alcohol-shaded hours, as legions of college students will attest.

2848 Broadway, at 111th. ✆ 212/222-1566. Daily 9am–2am. Subway: 1 to 110th St.

99¢ Fresh Pizza *PIZZA/SLICES* CLINTON A slice of pizza has historically tracked with the price of a subway ride, but worldwide spikes in wheat and cheese have sent the New York 'za standard up to $2.50. Literally bucking the trend is this high-turnover spot behind Port Authority. It may not get you over DiFara or Totonno's, but it's solid enough, with plenty of cheese and an appealing flavor. A meal deal of two slices and a soda is a mere $2.75. FINE PRINT Takeout only.

569 Ninth Ave., at 41st St. ✆ 212/268-1461. Daily 24 hr. Subway: A/C/E or 7 to Port Authority. Other location: *Midtown East*, 151 E. 43rd St., btw. Lexington and Third aves. ✆ 212/922-0257. Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to Grand Central.

Sal's & Carmine's Pizza *PIZZA* UPPER WEST SIDE At your first taste of the pizza here, you will realize what your previous 10,000 New York slices were supposed to taste like. Creamy mozzarella synchs with a tangy sauce and crispy crust to achieve perfection. Sal or Carmine is usually on hand to ensure quality control, and a curmudgeonly atmosphere. Each pie is a work of art and cannot be expected to endure the indignity of a ride in an insulated plastic carrier: no delivery here. A regular slice is $2.50; add a buck for toppings.

Pizza Frank's Way

In the 70-plus years that the coal oven has been burning at Patsy's in Harlem, the surrounding neighborhood has lost much of its Italian identity. It's not exactly gentrified and it's a haul to get here, but that's the effort required to get the best pizza pie in the city. One taste of the thin and distinctive crust and you'll know why this place was Sinatra's favorite. Inside the restaurant, murky lighting, threadbare furnishings, and a surly staff make the takeout window the more pleasant option. A plain pie is $11; toppings are $3 each. 2287 First Ave., btw. 117th and 118th sts. ✆ 212/534-9783. Daily 11:30am–11:30pm. Subway: 6 to 116th St.

Sweet Indulgences

Beard Papa Sweets Cafe UPPER WEST SIDE Cream puffs are the specialty at this Asian import, where the treats are as appetizing as the name is not. Crisp choux pastries hold a cream and custard filling. Everything is fresh-baked, and despite a sprinkling of powdered sugar, the treats aren't overly sweet. Basic vanilla and specials like green tea or sesame come in around $2 per puff. 2167 Broadway, btw. 76th and 77th sts. ✆ **212/799-3770.** www.muginohousa.com. Daily 10am–8pm. Subway: 1 to 79th St. Other locations: *West Village,* 5 Carmine St., btw. Bleecker St. and Sixth Ave. ✆ **212/989-8855.** Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.; *Astor Place,* 740 Broadway, btw. Astor and Waverly places. ✆ **212/358-8888.** Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Dragon Land Bakery CHINATOWN My favorite sweet cheap stops are in Chinatown. Bakeries litter the landscape here, all of them offering up fresh goods at ridiculous prices. The differences between any two shops are subtle, but Dragon Land does a particularly good job. In addition to baked goods, the mango and green tea flavored puddings are delicious. Prices range from 75¢ to $4. 125 Walker St., btw. Centre and Baxter sts. ✆ **212/219-2012.** Daily 7:30am–8pm. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

2671 Broadway, btw. 101st and 102nd sts. ✆ **212/663-7651.** Daily 11am–11pm. Subway: 1 to 103rd St.

Two Boots *PIZZA/SLICES* EAST VILLAGE This is not a traditional New York slice, nor is it trying to be. Mixing elements of two boot-shaped regions (Italy and Louisiana), the pizzas here are brightly spiced. The crust is thin and crisp, cheese is minimal, and the sauce has lots of oregano. Purists scoff, but I think it's delicious. A regular slice is $2.50.

42-44 Ave. A, at E. 3rd St. ✆ **212/254-1919.** www.twoboots.com. Sun–Tues 11:30pm–11pm; Wed–Thurs 11:30am–midnight; Fri–Sat 11:30am–2am. Subway: F/V to Second Ave. Other location: *West Village,* 75 Greenwich Ave., btw. Seventh Ave. and 11th St. ✆ **212/633-9096.** Subway: 1 to Christopher St. (More locations throughout the city.)

16 Into the Drink

FREE WINE TASTINGS

The intricacies of wine are endless, which is excuse enough to try as much of the stuff as possible. The wine shop tasting experience can be frustrating because you're only getting sips, but if you've come for edification and not to catch a cheap buzz, there's little chance of going away disappointed. Besides, many shops throw in free snacks for your trouble.

Astor Wines & Spirits NOHO FREE Astor's ginormous space in the basement of the aptly named De Vinne Press Building usually hosts free tastings on Thursdays and Fridays from 6 to 8pm, and Saturday afternoons from 3 to 5pm. Look for artisanal champagnes, liquor, and sakés among the offerings, with the booze in question usually discounted 15%.

399 Lafayette St., at E. 4th St. ✆ **212/674-7500.** www.astorwines.com. Subway: 6 to Bleecker St.; B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette.

Best Cellars New York UPPER EAST SIDE FREE Tastings can be found 6 days a week at this classy wine shop. Weeknights from 5 to 8pm find wine samples following a weekly theme. On Saturday afternoons from 2 to 4pm, the wine often comes with a free snack provided by a visiting local chef.

1291 Lexington Ave., at 87th St. ✆ **212/426-4200.** www.bestcellars.com. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St. Other location: *Upper West Side,* 2246 Broadway, btw. 80th and 81st sts. ✆ **212/362-8730.** Subway: 1 to 79th St.

Chambers Wines TRIBECA FREE The tastings at this wine shop are informal and friendly. Free bread and cheese help the vintages go down. Check the website for events, often scheduled on Saturday afternoons.

160 Chambers St., btw. W. Broadway and Greenwich. ✆ **212/227-1434.** www.chambersstwines.com. Subway: 1/2/3 to Chambers St.

Chelsea Wine Vault CHELSEA FREE This wine store in the Chelsea Market has an excellent, if somewhat pricey, selection. Wine (and liquor) tastings are held a couple of nights a week (usually between Fri and Sun). Some include free food and are pretty elaborate affairs, so check the website to see if an RSVP is required. The wines in question are sold at 10% discounts during tastings.

75 Ninth Ave., near 15th St. ✆ **212/462-4244.** www.chelseawinevault.com. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

67 Wines and Spirits UPPER WEST SIDE FREE Rotating hosts walk guests through wine tastings at this shop, highlighting the fruits of a particular country or region. Tastings are usually on Fridays and Saturdays; check the website for a calendar.

179 Columbus Ave., btw. 67th and 68th sts. ✆ **212/724-6767.** www.67wine.com. Subway: 1 to 66th St.

Union Square Wines UNION SQUARE FREE Newly relocated to a larger space, this shop still has a friendly vibe. They also still have tastings several nights a week. The neighborhood is lousy with great chefs, and food demonstrations (with free tastes) are held here as well.

140 Fourth Ave., at 13th St. ✆ **212/675-8100.** www.unionsquarewines.com. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

17 Pub Grub

That person who first thought to put a bowl of peanuts near a barstool must have known: There's nothing like a salty treat to keep the beer orders flowing. Several New York bars put on barbecues to hold drinkers' interest, and chicken wings are as ubiquitous as Yankee caps in September. Much of the grub goes for free, though most places expect you to spring for a drink or two—since they're running bars and all.

Croxley Ales EAST VILLAGE This pub represents something between the death of a once-proud indie 'hood and a breath of unpretentious relief in a trendier-than-thou zone. Croxley puts games on its televisions and offers specials at the bar. If you're drinking, you're entitled to 20¢ wings on Saturdays from noon to 5pm, and all day and night on Sundays. That price goes down to 10¢ on Monday and Wednesday nights from 5pm to 1am. Fridays from 5 to 7pm at the bar, take that 10¢ off the price—the wings are free. (Weekday happy hours run from 5–7pm, with $1 off of most everything.)

28 Ave. B, btw. 2nd and 3rd sts. ✆ **212/253-6140.** www.croxley.com. Kitchen open Mon–Sat 11am–1am; Sun noon–1am. Bar open nightly until 2am. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

The Delancey LOWER EAST SIDE The rooftop of this lowrise bar is an oasis on the Manhattan side of the Williamsburg Bridge. Palms and fountains provide a tropical air. On select summer days, that air

Dough for No Dough: Free Pizza with Beer

Sibling bars let boozing New Yorkers soak up some of that hootch with free pizza.

Alligator Lounge WILLIAMSBURG This lounge took over a former pizza joint to exploit an existing wood-burning oven. The result is remarkably good pies, free with the purchase of a drink. That's right—a free personal pizza with your beer. Toppings run $2 for the first and $1 for the follow ups. The pies roll from 6pm on the weekdays and 3pm on the weekends, and they don't stop until a bleary-eyed 3:30am. 600 Metropolitan Ave., btw. Leonard and Lorimer sts. Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/599-4440.** Daily 3pm–4am. Subway: G/L Lorimer St./Metropolitan Ave.

Crocodile Lounge EAST VILLAGE This Alligator spin-off may not win any prizes for its pizzas, but it's hard to beat for price ($0) and convenience (especially for NYU students). The lure of one free pizza per drink attacts a young and hungry crowd. Crocodile kitsch and free Skee-Ball round out the atmosphere. 325 E. 14th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/477-7747.** Daily noon–4am. Subway: L to First Ave.

fills with burger and dog smoke from the grill ($5 to eat). When you've had your fill of flesh, head downstairs for free live rock. (And 5–8pm Mon–Thurs enjoy $2-off happy hours.)

168 Delancey St., btw. Clinton and Attorney sts. ✆ **212/254-9920.** www.thedelancey.com. Daily 5pm–4am. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

East River Bar WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN East of the East River is the site of this paint factory turned biker bar turned casual South Williamsburg hang. Industrial chic corrugated metal adorns the outdoor patio, which holds a real, live barrel drum barbecue pit. That, and three smaller grills, provide the fire for BYOBBQ nights (as in Bring Your Own). Call ahead to reserve charcoal space.

97 S. 6th St., btw. Bedford and Berry sts. ✆ **718/302-0511.** www.eastriverbar.com. Sun–Thurs 5pm–3am; Fri–Sat 5pm–4am. Subway: J/M/Z to Marcy Ave.

Fish WEST VILLAGE This restaurant is a decent facsimile of a seafood shack, with a lively crowd and walls cluttered with old waterfront photos and buoys. Though the sit-down prices aren't cheap, you can net a great deal at the bar. Just $8 covers a half-dozen oysters and a beer or glass of house wine. Available at all hours, 7 days a week, and perfect for date nights.

280 Bleecker St., at Jones St. ✆ **212/727-2879.** Sun–Thurs noon–11pm; Fri–Sat noon–midnight. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.; A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.

Hank's Saloon BOERUM HILL, BROOKLYN Rockabilly and alt-country set the tone for this down-home scene, which peaks on laid-back barbecue Sundays. Delicacies vary, but tend to the hot dog and hamburger side of things, and they're totally free. Honky-tonk masters Sean Kershaw & the New Jack Ramblers provide the soundtrack. Shows start around 9:30pm and run until 1am. Parched gullets can be assuaged with $2 PBRs. Monday nights come with the same catered barbecue, with a soundtrack courtesy of Live Band Kuntry Karaoke (p. 78). The cost is the same, too—completely free.

46 Third Ave., at Atlantic Ave. ✆ **718/625-8003.** www.exitfive.com/hankssaloon. Mon–Sat 11am–4am; Sun noon–4am. Subway: 2/3/4/5/Q to Atlantic Ave.; M/N/R/W to Pacific St.

Lost and Found GREENPOINT, BROOKLYN Arcade games, a photo booth, pool tables, and Skee-Ball keep the hipster masses entertained here. Lost and Found also keeps them fed, with hotdogs and veggie dogs given away with the purchase of a drink. Score a free bagel when you order a mimosa or bloody mary weekend afternoons.

113 Franklin St., at Greenpoint Ave. ✆ **718/383-6000.** Mon–Fri 3pm–4am; Sat–Sun noon–4am. Subway: G to Greenpoint Ave.

Metropolitan WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN When the weather turns forgiving, the grill at this gay Williamsburg haunt turns to wings, dogs, and veggie burgers. The patio setting is spectacular, with lots of space beneath the creeping vines. A cheerful crowd gets even friendlier the more they're plied with cheap drinks and free meat (or fake meat, as the case may be). Start time is around 5:30pm on Sunday afternoons.

559 Lorimer St., btw. Metropolitan Ave. and Devoe St. ✆ **718/599-4444.** www.myspace.com/metropolitan11211. Daily 3pm–4am. Subway: G/L to Lorimer St./Metropolitan Ave.

R-Bar WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN This divey spot under the BQE attracts a Billyburg cross-section. Happy hours run daily from 5pm to 9pm (and all day Sun) with two-for-one brews. To help sop up the suds, you can find food specials on Monday nights (free chicken wings) and Sunday afternoons (a rotating free bar-food selection).

451 Meeker Ave., at Graham Ave. ✆ **646/523-1813.** www.myspace.com/r_bar. Mon–Fri 5pm–4am; Sat–Sun noon–4am. Subway: G to Nassau Ave.; L to Graham Ave.

Sip UPPER WEST SIDE This coffee shop/lounge treats its local clientele right, with half-price food on Mondays, half-price wine on Wednesdays, and free Wi-Fi all through the week—but the major draw? Happy hour. Free tapas like beet salad or sausage and potatoes come out for drinkers between 5 and 7pm, and again between 2 and 4am, on top of discounted libations.

998 Amsterdam Ave., btw. 109th and 110th sts. ✆ **212/316-2747.** www.sipbar.com. Daily 6am–4am. Subway: B/C or 1 to 110th St.

18 Liquid Assets

Despite the rise of the $12 cocktail, an entire paycheck isn't required for a night on the town. Recession pressures have opened up happy hours across town, and two-for-ones and $1-off specials are ubiquitous. Even sweeter deals can be found, especially in the cheap drinker's mecca of the East Village. If you're not into paying at all, you can also log on to **www.myopenbar.com**, although if it's advertised to the whole interwebs you can be assured it's a full-on scrum to get to the goods.

Bar None EAST VILLAGE For the longest happy hour in the city the choice is, without exception, Bar None. You have to wait until noon for it to begin, but once it does you get $3 Bud and Bud Light pints and $4 wells and other drafts. The specials run until 11pm, when the Power Hour begins. Until midnight, it's $2 Buds joined by $2 well drinks. The environs are divey, but it's perfectly amiable, and the prices can't be beat.

98 Third Ave., btw. 12th and 13th sts. ✆ **212/777-6663.** www.barnonenyc.com. Daily noon–4am. Subway: L to Third Ave.

Cheap Shots (and Beer) EAST VILLAGE Cheap Shots is an unreconstructed dive that stays true to its name with rotating drink specials. The aforementioned shots start at $2 (they're small and cut with

juice, but whaddya expect for 2 bucks?), and $7 pitchers can be found as well.

140 First Ave., btw. St. Marks Place and 9th St. ✆ 212/254-6631. Daily noon–4am. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

Doc Holliday's EAST VILLAGE Redneck theme bars would seem to be a tough sell in cosmopolitan Manhattan, but quite a few trashy joints thrive here. Doc Holliday's plies the familiar formula, with attractive bar crews and booze priced to sell. Tuesday nights are all you can drink from 8 to 11pm. It's $5, and the beverage in question is Bud Light, and the surroundings are less than clean, but after a few trips to the bar who remembers? Buy-one-get-one-free happy hours run daily from 5 to 8pm.

141 Ave. A, at 9th St. ✆ 212/979-0312. Daily noon–4am. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

Gowanus Yacht Club CARROLL GARDENS This Brooklyn bar saves money by not bothering to rent a roof. The resulting garden space is restorative, inhabited by locals who do their best to further a small-fishing-town vibe. Beer specials vary, but you can rely on the availability of a $3 can of Pabst (two for $5). The comestible accompaniments are highlighted by $1 hot dogs. Like any good seaside resort, this one is only open between May and October.

323 Smith St., at President St. ✆ 718/246-1321. Mon–Fri 4pm–2am; Sat–Sun 2pm–3am. Subway: F/G to Carroll St.

Jeremy's Ale House FINANCIAL DISTRICT When you need to show tourists real New Yorkers, consider bringing them to über-authentic Jeremy's. A mix of blue and white collars hangs out beneath a burgeoning collection of liberated ties and bras. The house is known for its huge Styrofoam cups, which hold a full *quart* of beer. A Coors is $5. After-work happy hours (weekdays 4–6pm) feature half-price well drinks, $4 Coors and Coors Light buckets, and $1.50 junior burgers. With the fish market departed from South Street there are fewer takers, but construction workers and film students can still avail themselves of "The Eye Opener," $1.75 for a bucket of Coors, available Monday through Friday from 8 to 10am.

228 Front St., btw. Peck Slip and Beekman St. ✆ 212/964-3537. www.jeremysalehouse.com. Mon–Fri 8am–midnight; Sat 10am–midnight; Sun noon–11pm. Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St.

What's in a Name?: Free Drinks

If you're one of those people who has a name, you can drink for $0 and 0¢ at bars **No Idea** and **Antarctica.** There is one small catch: Your name has to synch up with the name of the night. Each bar posts a different monthly list, and although there are some oddball monikers, there are also plenty of occasions to hang out with fellow Meghans, Joshes, and Jessicas. Open-tab Name Night runs 5 to 11pm nightly (at Antarctica 8pm–1am on Sat; closed Sun). Check www.noideabar.com and www.antarcticabar.com to see when you're up. FINE PRINT They're not running a booze charity; the idea is to drag along some friends and let them run up the tab while you hobnob with a roomful of fellow Vartans. If you show up alone they may not let you play along. *No Idea:* 30 E. 20th St., btw. Park Ave. and Broadway. ✆ **212/777-0100.** Subway: 6 or N/R/W to 23rd St. *Antarctica:* 287 Hudson, at Spring St. ✆ **212/352-1666.** Subway: C/E to Spring St.

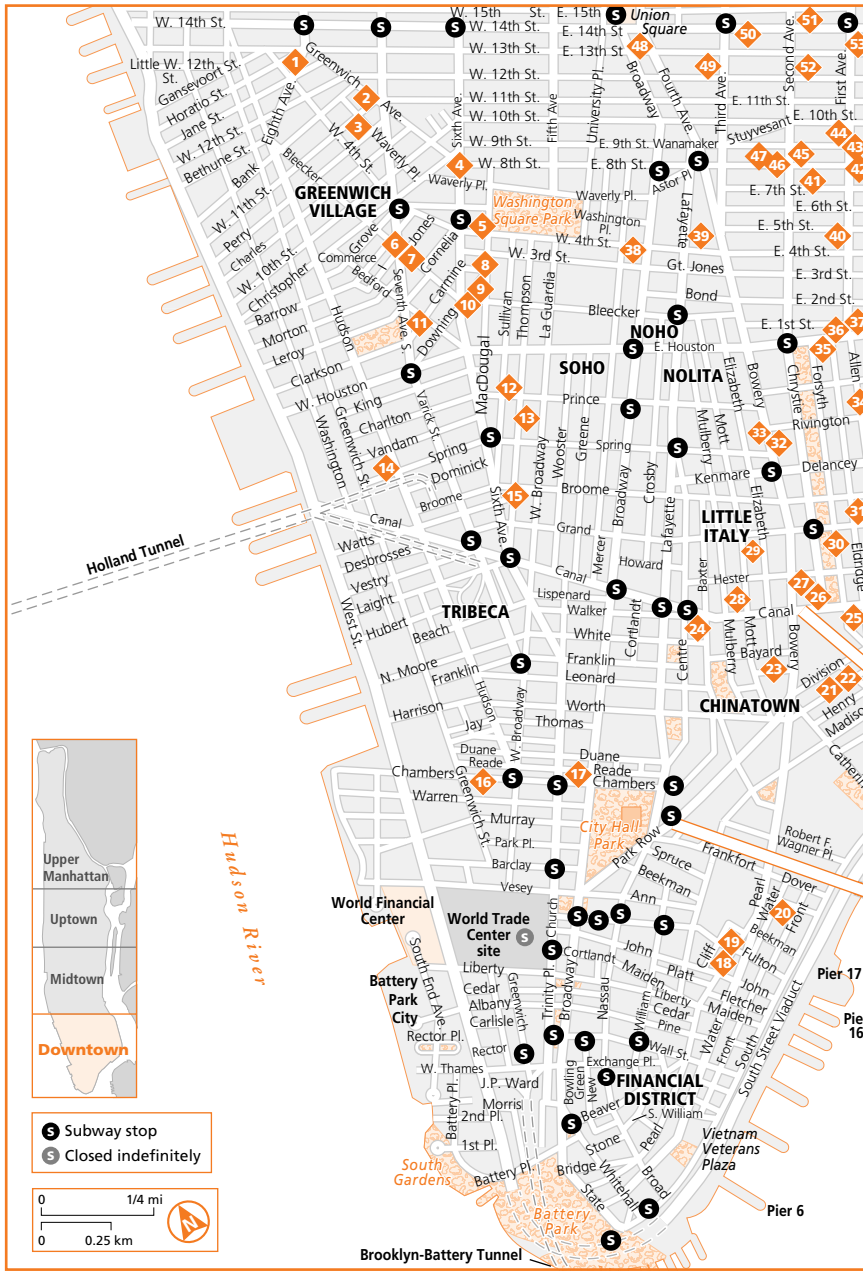
Slane WEST VILLAGE Irish conviviality and exposed brick make for a charming atmosphere in the middle of a touristy 'hood. The weekday "Beat the Clock" happy hour ticks down some great deals. From noon to 2pm well drinks are only $1. For the 2 to 4pm shift, select drafts take over the $1 slot and wells go to $2. A series of $3 tipples fills out the afternoon, all the way to 8pm.

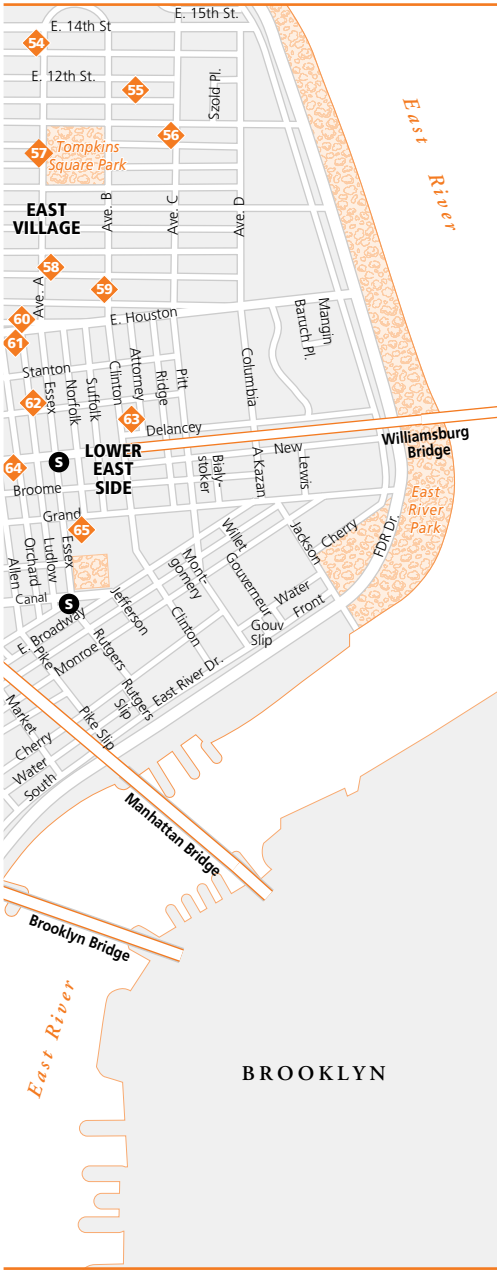
102 MacDougal St., btw. Bleecker and W. 3rd sts. ✆ **212/505-0079.** www.slanenyc.com. Mon–Sat 11am–4am; Sun noon–4am. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.

Verlaine LOWER EAST SIDE Finding a dive that'll hook you up with a cheap happy hour is no great sleight, but a sleek spot that'll discount you seven nights a week? Verlaine's house specials are a lychee martini, just $5 between 5 and 10pm, joined by $5 sangrias, Vietnamese bloody marys, basic cocktails, and house wine—and $3 Yuenglings. The space is a little generic, but it's stylish, and you don't have to pad yourself with cocktail napkins to avoid sticking to the surfaces.

110 Rivington St., btw. Essex and Ludlow sts. ✆ **212/475-7621.** www.verlainenyc.com. Sun–Wed 5pm–1am; Thurs–Sat 5pm–4am. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

EATING & DRINKING DOWNTOWN





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Kofoo **9**
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Tebaya **15**
Tehuitzingo Mexican Deli **2**
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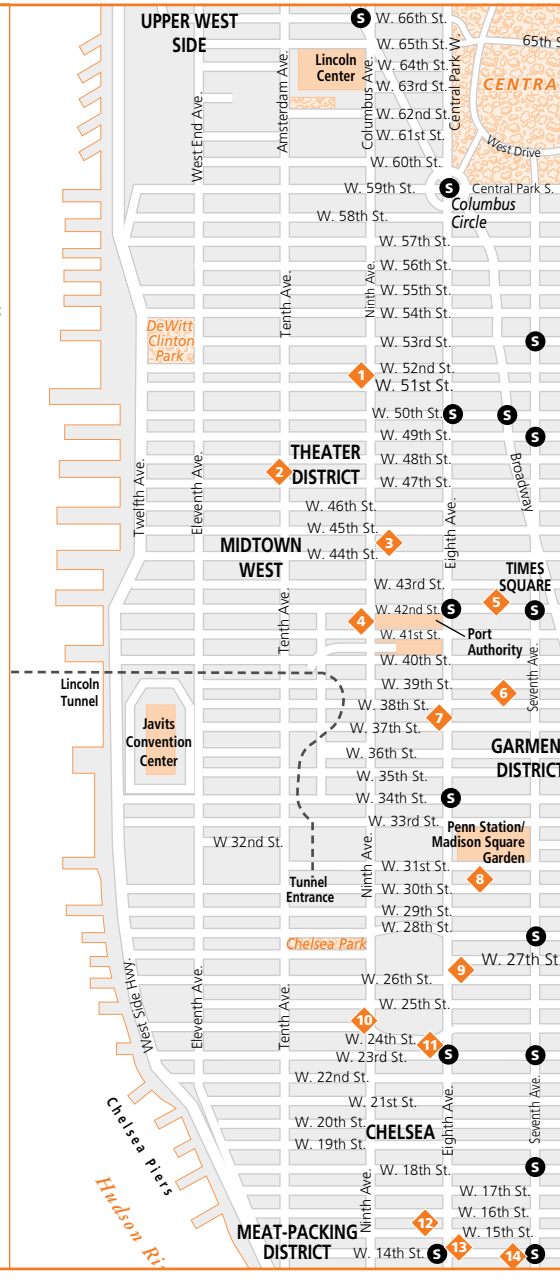

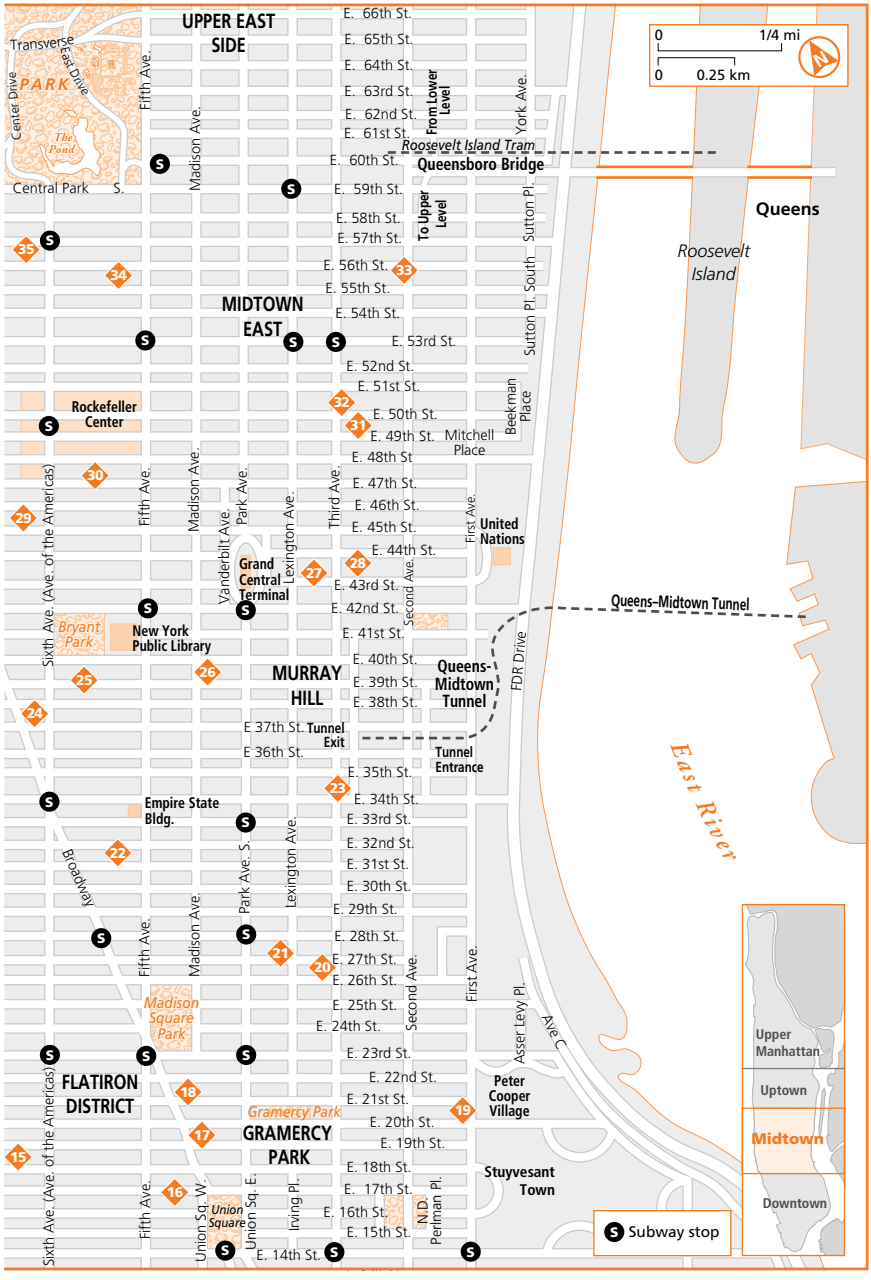
UPPER EAST SIDE
MIDTOWN EAST
MURRAY HILL
FLATIRON DISTRICT
GRAMERCY PARK
Peter Cooper Village
Stuyvesant Town
Rockefeller Center
Grand Central Terminal
New York Public Library
Empire State Bldg.
United Nations
Queens-Midtown Tunnel
Tunnel Exit
Tunnel Entrance
Queensboro Bridge
Roosevelt Island Tram
Roosevelt Island
Queens
East River
Queens–Midtown Tunnel
Central Park
Transverse
East Drive
Center Drive
The Pond
Bryant Park
Madison Square Park
Gramercy Park
Union Square
Mitchell Place
Beekman Place
Sutton Pl. South
Sutton Pl.
York Ave.
First Ave.
Second Ave.
Third Ave.
Park Ave.
Madison Ave.
Fifth Ave.
Sixth Ave. (Ave. of the Americas)
Vanderbilt Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Park Ave. S.
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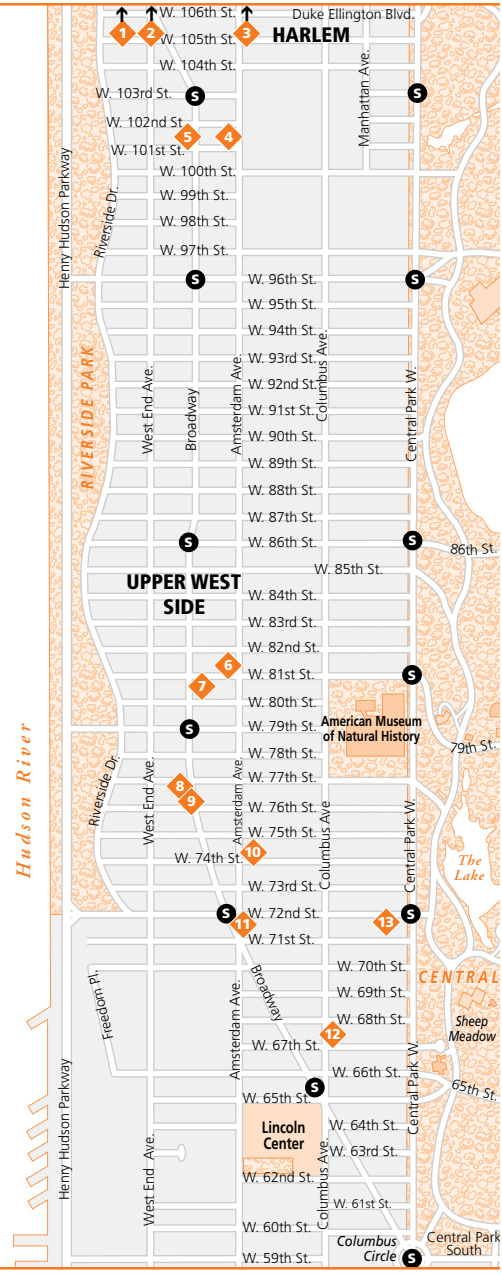
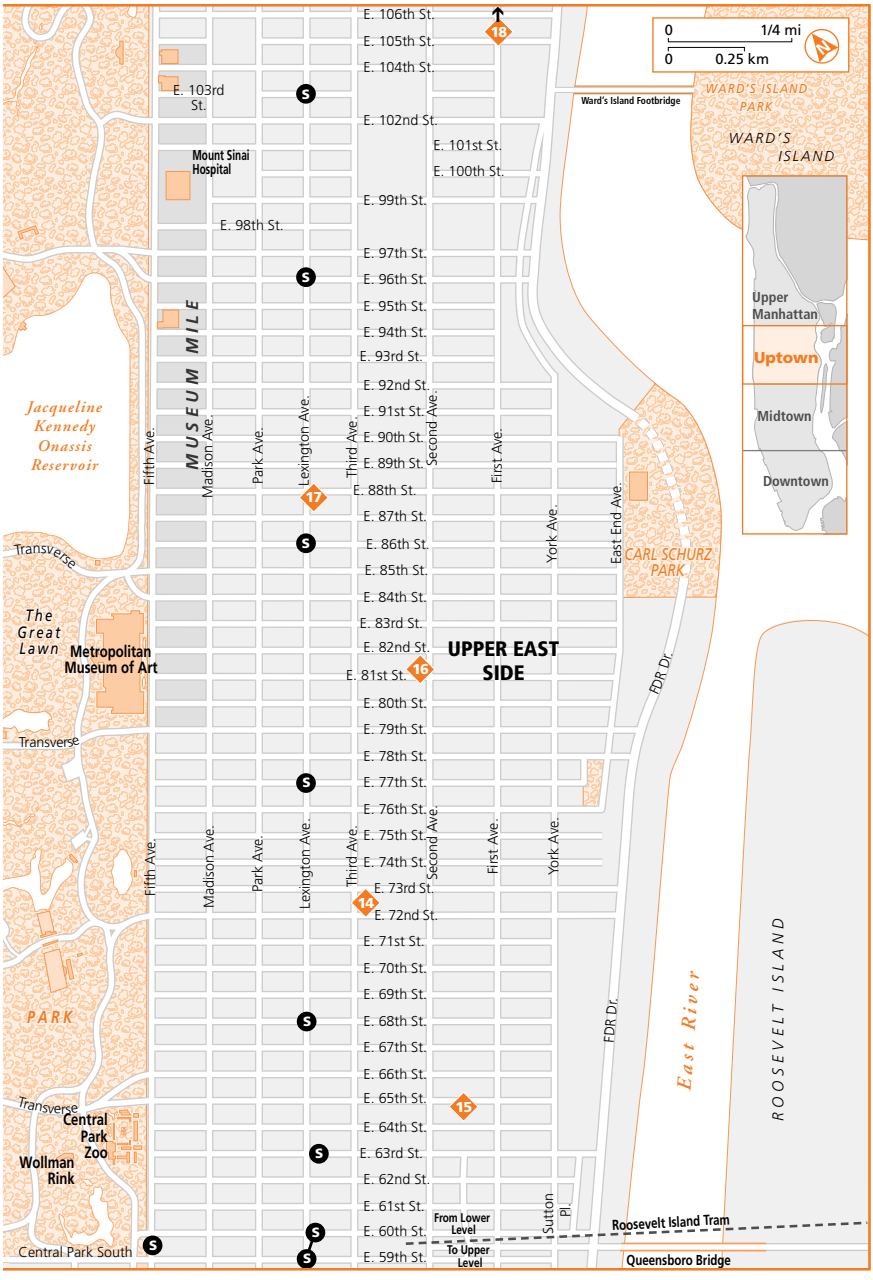
Uptown
Midtown
Downtown
Subway stop

EATING & DRINKING UPTOWN

67 Wines and Spirits **12**
Absolute Bagel **1**
Beard Papa's **9**
Best Cellars New York **7**, **17**
Big Nick's Burger Joint/Pizza Joint **8**
Dallas BBQ **13**, **14**
East Japanese Restaurant **15**
Gray's Papaya **11**
Hummus Place **10**
Koronet **2**
Land **6**, **16**
Noche Mexicana **4**
Patsy's **18**
Sal's & Carmine's Pizza **5**
Sip **3**



Subway stop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WARD'S ISLAND PARK
WARD'S ISLAND
Ward's Island Footbridge
Upper Manhattan
Uptown
Midtown
Downtown
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E. 105th St.
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E. 59th St.
Mount Sinai Hospital
MUSEUM MILE
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir
Fifth Ave.
Madison Ave.
Park Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
Second Ave.
First Ave.
York Ave.
East End Ave.
CARL SCHURZ PARK
FDR Dr.
East River
ROOSEVELT ISLAND
UPPER EAST SIDE
Transverse
The Great Lawn
Metropolitan Museum of Art
PARK
Central Park Zoo
Wollman Rink
Central Park South
From Lower Level
To Upper Level
Sutton Pl.
Roosevelt Island Tram
Queensboro Bridge

New Yorkers focus their energy before punching the time clock with a free morning tai chi class at Bryant Park. See p. 181 for details.

4 LIVING

Anybody who thinks it's easy to live in New York is sitting on an ungodly mountain of cash. You don't have to look any further than the housing market to find trouble. For the privilege of paying $1,800 a month to live in a noisy veal pen, chances are you'll get hit with a 15% broker's fee. Health care, health insurance, health clubs—just about everything can come with an outrageous price tag. And yet eight million of us stay. The experience of being a New Yorker is too exciting and rich for us to complain long or loudly about the costs of living. We'd much rather talk about which neighborhood our apartment is in. Besides, the city presents plenty of free and cheap

opportunities to improve your quality of life, from classes and lectures to grooming and recreation. Leases notwithstanding, it is quite possible to live large on small budgets in NYC.

1 Sense for Cents: Education

LECTURES & SEMINARS

Just walking the streets and riding the subways is all too often a learning experience in New York, but most of us have room for further development along less informal lines. A handful of classes and a nearly endless selection of lectures provide New Yorkers with edification opportunities left and right. Cooper Union looks the other way when it comes to tuition, and although other local institutions aren't quite so generous, most have programs open to the public for little or no charge.

Battery Park City FREE In addition to giving us gorgeous open space, landscaping, and music aplenty, Battery Park also helps boost our eye-hand coordination. Three separate drawing classes are offered in the summer. Elements of Nature Drawing (Wed 11:30am–1:30pm), Drawing in the Park (Sat, except in Aug, 10:30am–noon), and Figure al Fresco (Wed 2:30–4:30pm), are all led by a bona fide artist. (Alas, the figure in Figure al Fresco is clothed.) See below for the eye-hand coordination covered by tai chi. Check the website for exact locations.

Battery Park City, along South End Ave., just west of West St. ✆ 212/267-9700. www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.; 1 to Rector St. or South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center FREE This not-for-profit space brings in an international array of jazz and pop performers. The concerts have standard ticket charges, but you can catch additional edification courtesy of the PAC's free humanities programs, which often run before shows. Documentary film footage and panel discussions (or Q&As) are the primary offerings; check the website for schedules.

199 Chambers St., btw. Greenwich St. and the West Side Hwy. ✆ 212/509-0300. www.tribecapac.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.

Columbia University FREE New York City's lone envoy to the Ivy League has an impressive events calendar, with talks and colloquiums

supplementing literary readings and musical performances. Topics range from esoteric science ("Vitrification and Depletion Phenomena in Soft Colloidal Systems") to less dry material ("The Place of Ozu within Japanese Film History"). Venues vary, although Lerner Hall is a popular location, 2922 Broadway, at 115th Street.

Main Campus, 2690 Broadway, entrance at 116th St. ✆ 212/854-9724. www.columbia.edu. Subway: 1 to 116th St.

Cooper Union FREE Self-made entrepreneur and inventor Peter Cooper founded the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 1857 to allow underprivileged talents to receive free educations. The college's mission hasn't changed, and 1,000 students currently attend without tuition. Admission is based solely on merit, and competition is, as you'd expect, fierce. The public can take advantage of the institution in other ways, however. The Saturday Outreach Program helps high school students further themselves in the arts with free classes (even the materials fee is waived). Student exhibitions can be seen in free galleries, and frequent free lectures are held in the Great Hall. These lectures routinely have inventive and intriguing subjects, and the big public room makes a great setting. Check online for an events calendar.

Cooper Sq., 8th St., btw. Bowery and Third Ave. ✆ 212/353-4120. www.cooper.edu/month.html. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Downtown Boathouse FREE Every Wednesday night in summer, the boathouse offers kayaking classes free to the public. Most classes are held in the waters of Clinton Cove Park. Put your new knowledge to work by coming back to borrow a kayak (free; see "Watersports," on p. 178). Classes start at 6pm, during the warmer months (Apr–Oct). In the colder months, you can catch a free kayaking skills class, though not in the frigid waters of the Hudson. Weekends from 4 to 5:30pm, the introductory programs are held in the comfort of an indoor pool at Riverbank State Park. Classes are $3, and you must have a Riverbank State Park ID card ($9).

***Clinton Cove Park*, Pier 96, West Side Hwy. at 56th St. ✆ 646/613-0375. www.downtownboathouse.org. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle. *Riverbank State Park*, 679 Riverside Dr., at 145th St. Subway: 1 to 145th St.**

Eglise Français du St-Esprit FREE The French Church of St. Esprit, an Episcopal congregation, performs its services in French. Before services, they offer a series of French classes, one for conversation, one for

beginners, and a third for intermediate parleyers. The classes are free, at 10am every Sunday. Services start at 11:15am.

100 E. 60th St., btw. Madison and Park aves. ✆ **212/838-5680.** www.stespritnyc.net. Subway: 4/5/6 or N/R/W to 59th St.; F to 63rd St.

The Frick Collection FREE Inside the Gilded Age confines of this elegant art museum, you can catch regular Wednesday evening lectures. Subjects tend toward painterly subjects like Albrecht Dürer's hands and Goya's black paintings. A series on "Artists, Poets, and Writers" broadens the floor to include in-person luminaries like Frank Stella and analysis of immortals like Henry James. Lectures start at 6pm, with doors opening at 5:30pm. Don't arrive earlier than that, lest they hit you up for the $15 admission fee.

1 E. 70th St., btw. Madison and Fifth aves. ✆ **212/288-0700.** www.frick.org. Subway: 6 to 68th St./Hunter College.

Gotham Writers' Workshop FREE The Microsoft of NYC's writing programs, Gotham churns out some 6,000 writers a year. You can sample the goods for free at frequent one-hour workshops. The events are held at the major bookstores around town, on topics like dialogue, travel writing, stand-up comedy, and Creative Writing 101.

Various locations. ✆ **212-WRITERS** [974-8377]. www.writingclasses.com.

The Graduate Center at the City University of New York FREE Continuing ed lectures, seminars, and panel discussions can be found here, with more possibilities for finding cheap smarts than any other institution in the city. You want range? Titles run from "Jewish Ethics Under Pressure" to "Unzipping the Monster Dick: Deconstructing Ableist Penile Representations in Two Ethnic Homoerotic Magazines." A program called Science & the Arts has particularly juicy material. There is a $10 registration fee per season, although many events are free and open to the public, with no registration required. Call to register, or go in person to Suite 8204 during normal business hours.

365 Fifth Ave., btw. 34th and 35th sts. ✆ **212/817-8215.** www.gc.cuny.edu. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.; 6 to 33rd St.

The Henry George School FREE Although Henry George is no longer a household name, in the 19th century his economics texts and lectures made him a major political player. His progressive ideas are still taught today, and in keeping with George's antiprivilege stance, the school that bears his name offers all of its programs for

FREE Learning English As a Second Language

If you've read this far, you probably don't need English lessons. Should there be a newly minted American in your circle of acquaintance, however, you can steer him to a couple of great city resources.

The **Riverside Language Program** assimilates people quickly through their intensive 6-week program. Open to permanent residents, classes run from 9:30am to 3:30pm, for levels from beginner to high intermediate. 490 Riverside Dr., at 120th St. and Riverside (enter at 91 Claremont Ave.). ✆ **212/662-3200.** www.riversidelanguage.org. Subway: 1 to 116th St.

For evening-only classes (and for people without permanent resident status), the **New York Public Library** has an extensive English program. Classes are conducted at 20 different branch libraries, and also include civics lessons for prospective citizens. Check www.nypl.org for schedules, or call ✆ **212/340-0918.**

free. Classes are available in English or Spanish, usually in the evenings. Teachings are based on George's championing of shifting tax burdens to landowners. ***Note:*** Finishing the school's Fundamental Economics course is the prerequisite for most upper-level work. Those interested in samples of the material can attend the Friday Evening Forum, a free lecture series held Fridays at 6:30pm.

121 E. 30th St., btw. Park and Lexington aves. ✆ **212/889-8020.** www.henrygeorgeschool.org. Subway: 6 to 28th St.

The New School FREE Though no longer so new (a 90th birthday celebration is coming right up), the New School stays pretty up-to-date, and there's still a progressive edge to its programs. The calendar of free events is cluttered with readings, lectures, panel discussions, student films, and even investing seminars. Events are open to the public, with some requiring advance reservation; check online for a full calendar.

66 W. 12th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/229-5600.** www.newschool.edu. Subway: F/V to 14th St.; L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

New York Public Library FREE It would be easier to list the classes not available for free at New York's public libraries than to mention all of the possibilities. Practical courses predominate, covering topics like writing, crafts, résumé updating, job searches, using the Internet, and the ins and outs of genealogical research. For a meta experience, you can also attend a self-directed class on how to take maximum advantage of library resources. The best way to get started is to get online and check out the options at your local branch.

For the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island branches, log on to **www.nypl.org/branch**, or call ✆ **212/930-0800.** For the Queens Borough Public Library, check **www.queenslibrary.org**, or call ✆ **718/990-0700.** In Brooklyn, log on to **www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org**, or you can call ✆ **718/230-2100.**

Every branch of the New York Public Library offers computers with free Internet, access to electronic databases, and Microsoft Office applications. Many branches also have computers loaded with multimedia CD-ROMs. You can spend your free days working on SimCity or ResumeMaker, depending on your level of job market optimism.

New York Society for Ethical Culture FREE For over a century and a quarter now, this organization has been providing New Yorkers with humanist alternatives to organized religion. A liberal outlook is usually presented in the free lectures that are held here, as well as at the regular talks on Sunday mornings. Three reading groups meet monthly from fall through spring, with annual tuitions in the laughably low $10 to $40 range for nonmembers. Log on to the website for exact schedules.

2 W. 64th St., at Central Park W. ✆ **212/874-5210.** www.nysec.org. Subway: 1/A/B/C/D/E to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

New York University FREE The streets around Washington Square Park are dominated by NYU architecture and NYU students, but the community is invited to take advantage of this private university's immense resources. Lecture programs (the history of the Village, say), talks, and symposia can be found for free here. Other events carry nominal admission charges, in the $2 to $5 range. The new Kimmel Center is a good place to start for free culture.

Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Sq. S., btw. LaGuardia Place and Thompson St. ✆ **212/998-4900.** www.nyu.edu. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Park Slope Food Co-op FREE This Brooklyn cooperative keeps its community informed with lectures, demonstrations, and even a few film screenings. Topics here are left-leaning, concerning food, the environment, and timely advice about how not to be killed by eating beef. Don't expect to see Karl Rove on the roster anytime soon. Everything is free, even to non-co-op members, although sometimes a small materials fee is added to food classes. Check online for the latest schedule. Classes and lectures are held on the second floor meeting room (which also hosts a periodic free clothes swap) unless otherwise noted.

782 Union St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves., Park Slope, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/622-0560.** www.foodcoop.com. Subway: M/R to Union St.; 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza; B/Q to Seventh Ave.

Poets House FREE This poetry library, which recently moved to a rent-free perch in Battery Park, keeps a terrific collection of crafted words. For spoken word, poets give frequent readings, and lectures can be found as well. Some events have admission charges, but free events, both here and off-site, dot the offerings. Check the online calendar for details.

2 River Terrace, at Murray St. ✆ **212/431-7920.** www.poetshouse.org. Subway: E to World Trade Center; 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.

Project Film School FREE It's hard to get much more democratic than free schools, hierarchy-free groupings open to all and dedicated to the notion that learning should be both literally and figuratively free.

FREE Getting Down to Business

The **Brooklyn Business Library** fosters the local small business scene with classes and workshops of an entrepreneurial bent. Everything from start-ups to small investing is covered by talks, and backed up with an excellent book collection. On Wednesday mornings from 10:15 to 11am you can get a free tour of the resources available. 280 Cadman Plaza, btw. Tech Place and Tillary St. ✆ **718/623-7000.** www.biz.brooklynpubliclibrary.org. Mon, Wed, Fri 9am–6pm; Tues 1–8pm; Thurs 1–6pm; Sat 10am–5pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall; M/R to Court St.; A/C/F to Jay St./Borough Hall.

In practice, this New York school gathers twice a month at documentary house DCTV to screen feature films, conduct master classes, and watch shorts submitted by the community. There are also "home screenings," with online discussions, and monthly theater fieldtrips (which cost the price of a movie ticket, alas). Check online for the full curriculum and exact dates of the pep rallies/home football games.

DCTV, 87 Lafayette St., at White St. www.projectfilmschool.org. Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Teachers and Writers Collaborative Literary readings and lectures fill the calendar at this long-running nonprofit. For high school students, there's also an excellent after-school program dedicated to the spoken word (www.urbanwordnyc.org). Check the website for upcoming events.

The Center for Imaginative Writing, 520 Eighth Ave., btw. 36th and 37th sts. ✆ 212/691-6590. www.twc.org. Subway: A/C/E to 34th St./Penn Station.

TANGO & NO CASH

Central Park Tango FREE Under the Bard of Avon's watchful gaze, couples spin away Saturday nights here. Meet up at the south end of the Mall, right next to the Shakespeare statue. Tyros can take advantage of free classes, usually offered at 7pm. In inclement weather, dancers seek the shelter of the nearby Dairy. Otherwise it's alfresco under dusk skies, as they dance their ringlets to the whistling wind.

Central Park, enter around 65th St. ✆ 212/726-1111. www.spiceevents.net/tango_cp_sssp.html. June–Sept, Sat 6–9pm. Subway: F to Lexington Ave./63rd St.; 6 to 68th St./Hunter College; 1 to 66th St./Lincoln Center.

Chelsea Market FREE Don't cry for New York, not when there's free tango every Friday evening. Beyond the gourmet food and clunky installation art of Chelsea Market you'll find a relaxed impromptu dance floor scene. Evenings begin with lessons at 5pm, followed 45 minutes later with live bands and three hours of dancing. (Come back on a Tues and you can learn or show off salsa dancing skills, also with a live band, during the same hours.)

Chelsea Market, btw. Ninth and Tenth aves. and 15th and 16th sts.; dancing is on the ground floor by the waterfall. No phone. www.chelseamarket.com. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

FREE Dancing Days

If you're getting married, or have some other compelling reason to be interested in learning to dance, look into **Dance Manhattan.** Hustle and Carolina Shag are among the offerings. To get your feet wet for free, check out their monthly open houses. At 8pm, there's a lesson, half in ballroom and half in Latin. Lessons are followed by a party, and a performance after that. If you get hooked then and there, you'll be eligible for a discount on regular registration. 39 W. 19th St., 5th Floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/807-0802.** www.dance-manhattan.com. Subway: N/R/W or F/V to 23rd St.

If the wedding has already taken place and nature has run its course, you may have children that need entertaining. Battery Park City hosts a series of **Family Dances** on Fridays and Saturdays during the summer. This being New York, expect an international array of steps. West African, Swedish, and swing dancing are usually on the bill. Neither children nor experience with West African, Swedish, or swing dance moves are required. Battery Park City, along South End Ave., just west of West St. ✆ **212/267-9700.** www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.; 1 to Rector St. or South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

If Battery Park's locale isn't idyllic enough for you, fox trot on up to **Riverside Park South** for sunset lessons. Summer Sundays provide the backdrop for a series of salsa and swing dances taught by **Soho Dance Studio.** There are some group steps, too, if you need a couple of bodies to hide behind—6 to 9pm. Pier 1, the Hudson at 70th St. ✆ **212/408-0219.** www.nycgovparks.org. Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.

Tango Porteño Sultry summer nights are made for tangoing. On the Seaport piers, Tango Porteño hosts a Sunday night dance party with a great atmosphere. The East River rushes gently by, and the lights of downtown glitter overhead as couples make their angular dips and spins. Instead of a band there's a somewhat tinny sound system, but no one seems to mind. To cover pier rental costs, a $5 donation is requested. It takes two, but if you arrive alone, just watching can be entertainment enough. Free lessons are conducted at 8:30pm.

Pier 16 at the South St. Seaport, btw. the Ambrose and the Peking. In case of rain go to Red restaurant, just to the north at 19 Fulton St. ✆ **212/726-1111.** www.spiceevents.net/tango_cp_sssp.html. May–Oct, Sun 7pm–midnight (or later.) Subway: 2/3/4/5/J/M/Z to Fulton St. or A/C to Broadway/Nassau, walk east to the river.

Triangulo FREE As a reflection of their confidence in tango's ability to hook new dancers, this studio throws in free beginner's workshops (usually one Fri and one Sat evening a month). They also run specials for newbies, like $70 for a month's worth of classes. Check the website for exact dates and details.

135 W. 20th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/633-6445.** www.tangonyc.com. Subway: 1 to 18th St.; F/V to 23rd St.

2 Health Sans Wealth

Sadly, far too many New Yorkers get by on a "just don't get sick" health plan. As many as one-fourth of us are uninsured, and medical fees aren't getting any cheaper. Thank goodness, then, for the sliding scale. Several good-hearted community-minded organizations provide care at rates commensurate with an individual's income. If your income is low enough, you may also be eligible for subsidized insurance with an HMO. A good website to check out is that of the **Actors' Fund of America** (www.actorsfund.org). The fund has comprehensive listings for actors and artists who don't have the kinds of day jobs that throw in insurance and health care. Dentists, shrinks, and acupuncturists can also be tracked down for bodies on budgets.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Folks with cushy jobs can expect to see insurance on their laundry list of benefits. With more and more arts and media freelancers in the marketplace, however, it's easy to find oneself on the wrong side of the feudal walls. The **Freelancers Union** and **Working Today** (✆ **718/222-1099;** www.freelancersunion.org) have combined to garner some of the bulk-rate buying power of a corporation. If you aren't afraid of a high deductible (like $10K high), one plan comes in as low as $130.37 a month. For $239.64 a month you can get a decent deductible and co-pay arrangement. Unfortunately, the program is for artists and media types, leaving out our chef and waitress friends. **Healthy New York** is New York State's program for lower-income residents who earn too much for Medicaid. If you work and make less than $26,000 a year

(individual) or $35,000 (couple), you may be able to take advantage of this plan. The premiums in Manhattan range from $160 to $291, without drug coverage, depending on which HMO you sign up with. Log on to www.healthyny.com or call ✆ **866/HEALTHY-NY** [432-5849] for more info. (And just to keep things simple, stay healthy.)

HEALTH CLINICS

New York's clinics tend to target specific constituencies. Though they may specialize in helping the indigent, or the HIV-positive, the clinics make it a policy not to discriminate against anyone. Even if you're uninsured, you can get some attention in places other than the city's emergency rooms. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources has a useful website (www.ask.hrsa.gov/pc) that lists some 16 HRSA-sponsored health centers that provide sliding-scale care.

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center This primary care center caters to the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community, but makes a point to be open to all. The general medicine and health and wellness programs are charged on a sliding scale.

356 W. 18th St., btw. Eighth and Ninth aves. ✆ 212/271-7200. www.callen-lorde.org. Subway: A/C/E to 14th St. or L to Eighth Ave.; 1 to 18th St.

David Ores, M.D. Many a Lower East Sider, including your humble correspondent, is grateful to general practitioner Dr. Dave for his attentive care and humane prices. Dr. Dave's tiny clinic serves the neighborhood with a nod to the uninsured. Prices have crept up a little in recent years, but the scale still slides, and Dr. Dave always treats his patients fairly. Call first for an appointment.

15 Clinton St., btw. E. Houston and Stanton sts. ✆ 212/353-3020. www.davidjoresmd.org. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Gay Men's Health Crisis Dedicated to slowing the spread of HIV and to helping out those already affected, this organization offers a host of services for the HIV-positive community. Health care is provided on a sliding scale basis, and there are also workshops, seminars, and even free legal services offered. The well-known GMHC Hot Line is open for calls Monday through Friday from 10am to 9pm, and Saturdays from noon until 3pm.

The Tisch Building, 119 W. 24th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 800/AIDS-NYC [243-7692]. www.gmhc.org. For other information, the main office line is ✆ 212/367-1000.

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene FREE The city operates eleven clinics in all five boroughs that offer free testing and treatment for STDs and HIV. They also follow up with no-cost counseling. Wait times can be on the long side, so show up before the clinic opens or bring a good book. (The same city department provides free condoms, at locations across the city; they also connect smokers with cessation programs, most of which are free—check the website.)

303 Ninth Ave., at 28th St. ✆ **311** for hot line, or 212/427-5120. www.nyc.gov/html/doh. Mon–Fri 8:30am–4pm; Sat 8:30am–noon; HIV testing only, Tues, Thurs 5–7pm. Subway: C/E to 23rd St. Check the website for other locations throughout the city.

New York City Free Clinic FREE NYU med students work with a professional at this Saturday morning clinic, where the homeless and the uninsured can get consultations, physicals, and other medical help. Advance appointments are required. If your chromosomes run XX, a new Women's Health Free Clinic may be suited to you, operating out of the same building. The Free Clinic website serves as an excellent clearinghouse for sliding scale and no-cost health care, too.

Inside the Sidney Hillman Clinic, 16 E. 16th St., btw. Union Sq. West and Fifth Ave. ✆ **917/544-0735,** or 212/206-5200 to schedule an appointment. www.med.nyu.edu/nycfreeclinic. Sat 9am–12:45pm. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Planned Parenthood FREE Free pregnancy tests are among the many reproductive-oriented services handled by this organization. Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan each has a clinic that can help out. Other services, including HIV counseling and assistance with STDs, have reasonable fees. Call the main number, ✆ **212/965-7000,** to schedule an appointment in any one of the clinics. FINE PRINT Hours are sometimes shorter than those listed below; call in advance to be sure.

Margaret Sanger Center, 26 Bleecker St., at Mott St. www.ppnyc.org. Mon–Tues 8am–4:30pm; Wed–Fri 8am–6:30pm; Sat 7:30am–4pm. Subway: 6 to Bleecker St.; B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette. *Borough Hall Center,* 44 Court St., btw. Remsen and Joralemon sts. Tues and Fri 8am–5:30pm; Wed 8am–4:30pm; Thurs 8am–6:30pm; Mon and Sat 8am–4pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall; M/R to Court St.; A/C/F to Jay St./Borough Hall. *Bronx Center,* 349 E. 149th St. at Courtlandt Ave. Mon–Wed, and Fri 8am–4:30pm; Thurs 8am–6:30pm. Subway: 4 to 149th Ave.; 2/5 to Third Ave./149th St.

Ryan Center The three associated Ryan clinics (on the Upper West Side, the Lower East Side, and in Midtown) provide a huge range of services, from HIV counseling to general medicine to mental health. Prices are set on a sliding scale.

William F. Ryan Community Health Center, Clinic at 110 W. 97th St., btw. Columbus and Amsterdam aves. ✆ **212/749-1820.** www.ryancenter.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or B/C to 96th St. *Ryan Center Annex*, 160 W. 100th St., btw. Columbus and Amsterdam aves. ✆ **212/769-7200.** Subway: 1/2/3 or B/C to 96th St. *Ryan-NENA Community Health Center*, 279 E. 3rd St. btw. aves. C and D. ✆ **212/477-8500.** Subway: F/V to Second Ave. All three clinics above open Mon and Thurs 8:30am–7pm; Tues–Wed and Fri 8:30am–4:30pm; Sat 9:30am–1pm (except July–Aug). *Ryan Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center*, 645 Tenth Ave., btw. 45th and 46th sts. ✆ **212/265-4500.** Mon–Tues and Thurs 8:30am–7pm; Wed and Fri 8:30am–4:30pm. Subway: C/E to 50th St.

DIRT CHEAP SHRINKS

National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis In an attempt to lessen the barriers to psychological treatment, this organization runs a referral service for affordable psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Potential analysands whose income levels qualify can take advantage of sliding-scale fees that start at $30 per session.

Theodore Reik Clinical Center for Psychotherapy, 150 W. 13th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/262-5978.** www.npap.org. Subway: F/V or 1/2/3 to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.

NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis As the largest psychoanalytic training program in the country, the range of techniques and treatments here is wide. You can help yourself while giving a postdoc the opportunity to practice on a real, live psyche (the training is excellent, and trainees are supervised by professors). There's a sliding scale, which gets very low for people with limited incomes—call for more information.

240 Greene St., 3rd floor, at Washington Place. ✆ **212/998-7890.** www.nyu.edu. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place; A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

ACUPUNCTURE

Pacific College of Oriental Medicine Clinic and Acupuncture Center More and more people are seeking out Chinese herbs and medicine as an alternative to the escalating costs of Western medicine.

This teaching clinic provides relatively inexpensive services, though the best bargains are for going under an intern's needles. Each session costs $40, with the eighth one free.

915 Broadway, 3rd floor, btw. 20th and 21st sts. ✆ **212/982-4600.** www.pacificcollege.edu. Mon–Fri 9am–9pm; Sat 9am–5pm. Subway: N/R/W to 23rd St.

Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences It's been over 10 years since this learning center added acupuncture to its roster, putting it somewhat ahead of the curve in New York. The Yu Wen Acupuncture Clinic lets students gain experience with patients under the watchful eye of licensed instructors. Twelve sessions are $325, but the program is popular so don't expect to get in immediately. You can download an application from the website or have it mailed to you by calling ✆ **212/924-5900,** ext. 130, and leaving your name and address.

226 W. 26th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/924-5900.** www.swedishinstitute.edu. Patients seen Mon 6–9pm; Tues and Thurs 1–5pm; Fri 1–9pm. Subway: 1 to 28th St.

Touro College Acupuncture Clinic Touro has an extensive Oriental Medicine graduate program, with an herbal pharmacy and training in acupuncture. Services to the public are performed by students, making for some deep discounts: $10 for an initial visit and then $25 for each followup. The clinic is brand-new, located on Touro's main campus in the Flatiron.

33 W. 23rd St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/463-0400,** ext. 313. www.touro.edu. Subway: N/R/W or F/V to 23rd St.

DENTAL

Columbia University College of Dental Medicine You can get Ivy Leaguers to poke around your mouth for cheap. The students and residents at this popular teaching clinic are well-trained and fully supervised. With several eyes on your teeth, the visit will take longer than a trip to a private clinic, but you'll pay a lot less. A first visit, which includes an oral health screening and X-rays, is $85.

Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, Vanderbilt Clinic, 622 W. 168th St., 7th floor, btw. Broadway and Fort Washington Ave. ✆ **212/305-6726.** www.dental.columbia.edu. Registration desk Mon–Fri 8:30am–2pm. Subway: 1/A/C to 168th St./Washington Heights.

New York College of Technology Student work makes for a seriously deep discount at the Dental Hygiene Clinic here. It will take a

while—professors supervise the work and have to check it over before you're let out on your way—but the students here are working for a grade and tend to be thorough about cleaning your teeth. Amazingly, a cleaning is only $10, and X-rays are only $5.

300 Jay St., btw. Tech Place and Tillary St. ✆ 718/260-5074. www.citytech.cuny.edu. Subway: 2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall; M/R to Court St./Borough Hall; A/C/F to Jay St./Borough Hall.

New York University College of Dentistry NYU runs the largest dental college in the country and offers deep discounts on dental care. An initial appointment (which may require two visits) is $90 and covers a checkup, X-rays, and oral cancer screenings. For further work, the costs here are half of what they would be in a professional office (a cleaning is $50), and for most folks the location is more convenient than Columbia's.

345 E. 24th St., at First Ave., Clinic 1A. ✆ 212/998-9872. www.nyu.edu/dental. Mon-Thurs 8:30am-8pm; Fri 8:30am-4pm. Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

HEARING

League for the Hard of Hearing FREE Auditory problems aren't just for rock stars, airline mechanics, and people who live beneath NYU students. Most of us haven't followed up on the tests we had in elementary school, but after years of headphone abuse and subway rides, it may be past time for a check-up. This nonprofit offers free hearing screenings on Tuesdays from noon to 2pm and Thursdays from 4 to 6pm (call ahead to reserve a time). If it turns out you do need services, this group has never turned away anyone due to an inability to pay.

50 Broadway, 6th floor, btw. Morris St. and Exchange Alley. ✆ 917/305-7700. www.lhh.org. Subway: 4/5 to Bowling Green; R/W or 1 to Rector St.; J/M/Z to Broad St.

ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

The American Center for the Alexander Technique FREE Tasmania-born thespian F. Matthias Alexander pioneered this enigmatic science, which seeks to retrain the body out of a lifetime of bad habits. To learn more, check out the free monthly demonstrations at this 40-year-old institution. They're held the first Monday of the month from 7 to 8:30pm. Seating is limited; call in advance to reserve a spot. Should you wish to follow up afterwards, third-year students at the

center need volunteers to receive free work. E-mail volunteer@acatnyc.org to get involved.

39 W. 14th St., Room 507, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/633-2229. www.acatnyc.org. Subway: F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.; N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

3 Home, Cheap Home

What would New Yorkers have to talk about if we weren't complaining about our living arrangements? Or, for a lucky few of us, bragging about them? I, for example, pay $264 a month for my rent-stabilized four bedroom with stunning views of the East River, Paris, and Cairo. The sad fact is, even as the economy only jogs along, NYC rental rates and housing prices remain firmly in the realm of the absurd. One concept we learn all too well in New York is that of the "relative bargain." For those not easily discouraged, however, a couple of resources can help a home-seeker get ahead.

NO-FEE RENTALS

Broker's fees, the 10% to 15% surcharge slapped on by the realtor who tours you around a series of spaces that are way too small and more than you can afford anyway, are the painful cost of renting in NYC. You can beat the system by contacting real estate firms directly, through their classifieds in the *Voice* and *Times,* and through their websites. It takes some legwork, but if your need for housing isn't urgent, it's the way to go. If you know a specific building you're interested in, try to talk to the super. They'll know what units might be available soon. Another option is **www.apartmentsource.com**. This website is a clearinghouse that lists no-fee apartments, although the listings tend toward big buildings with high prices. Patient trolling of Craigslist may be the best bet of all.

MIXED INCOME DIGS

In an effort to keep neighborhoods from becoming entirely monolithic, the city offers tax breaks to developers who are willing to set aside a certain number of units for middle- and low-income residents. As with everything else in life, the key is persistence. Waiting lists can be long and your lottery odds can be slim, but every time you make the effort to apply you tilt the playing field in your favor.

Department of Housing Preservation & Development This city agency connects buyers and sellers. The website lists lotteries for subsidized housing purchases, which will give you the keys at a substantially reduced cost. You'll have to meet income eligibility thresholds, and the property will have to be your primary residence. Most housing is in lower-income neighborhoods, often in outer reaches of the outer boroughs. Right now the pickings are pretty slim, but check the website for future apartment availability. There's also a lottery list for rental apartments, which are available way below market rates if you're lucky enough to have your application pulled from the hopper. ✆ **311.** For purchases, www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/buyers/lotteries.shtml; rentals www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/apartment/lotteries.shtml.

FREE Manhattan, Kansas

If New York real estate really has you down, look no further than depressed Midwestern towns for the ultimate giveaway: free land. All across the heartland, places with limited access to drag burlesque nights, human beat box subway train parties, and a decent bagel are giving up their soil for anyone who wants it. There are a couple of little strings attached—you have to build a house or business on the site and then you have to stay there—but the price cannot be beat. Expecially in New York. Visit www.kansasfreeland.com for county-specific details on claiming your free slice of the continent.

Mitchell-Lama Housing Companies This program has been around since 1955, offering housing to New Yorkers with lower-end incomes. You can choose from 132 city-sponsored buildings and 94 state-sponsored. Rents are highly subsidized, but the application process is cumbersome and not every building has an open waiting list. To get a .pdf file (readable with Adobe Acrobat) listing buildings with open lists, log on to www.nyc.gov/html/housinginfo/html/apartments/apt_rental_mitchell-lama.shtml. Each building has to be applied for individually. For general information, call ✆ **212/863-6500** for city units, or ✆ **212/480-7343** for state units.

New York City Housing Development Corporation The city promotes several mixed-income new developments in the five boroughs. The **80/20** program is fairly common. Twenty percent of a

FREE Renters' Assurance

Despite the incursions of the open market in recent years, there remain some one million regulated apartments in NYC. The **Metropolitan Council on Housing** (www.metcouncil.net) has spent the last 50 years fighting for the rights of renters, and the preservation of affordable housing. It's an uphill battle againt the big-money powers that be, but individuals can arm themselves with knowledge. The Met Council Hot Line provides information on tenant rights and dispenses advice. Call ✆ **212/979-0611** on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons between 1:30 and 5pm for help. There's also a walk-in clinic Tuesday nights (except in Aug) starting at 6:30pm, at 61 E. 4th St. between Second Avenue and the Bowery. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

building is rented at discount rates to people who earn significantly less than the neighborhood's median income. You have to apply directly to the developer and the process takes a while, but if you get in you'll score a great deal. In many cases, you can move up in income brackets without jeopardizing your cheap rent (or cheap purchase). Note that the buildings involved are usually in developing neighborhoods, not in the city's trendiest zip codes. Log on to www.nychdc.com for a full list of HDC-financed sites, or call ✆ **212/227-5500.**

DIRT CHEAP SLEEPS

Hostels

Have friends coming to town and in need of a bed? Why not send them over to the Mandarin Oriental, where a premier suite is a mere $1,995 a month? Er, a night. If your guests are on a budget, you can put them downtown, say a loft suite at the Mercer Hotel for a mere $1,500 per night. New York is the city that never sleeps affordably—even the Super 8 in Long Island City starts around $160 and goes up quickly from there. Savvy travelers (or halves of quarrelling couples who aren't on the lease) can spend the night for $30 or less, however, if they're not hostile to hostel life.

Big Apple Hostel With clean rooms and a primo Midtown location, this is the city's best choice for dirt-cheap sleeps. Bunk beds sleep four people per room. A kitchen, a backyard with barbecue, and air-conditioning round out the amenities. Dorm guests should bring their own towels, however.

119 W. 45th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/302-2603. www.bigapplehostel.com. 112 dorm beds. Tax included, around $39 per night, up to $60 right before New Year's Eve. Subway: 1/2/3/7/N/Q/R/W to Times Sq./42nd St.

Chelsea Center Hostel This small hostel on two floors of a Chelsea brownstone provides a laid-back alternative to its bustling competitors. A pleasant garden and friendly continental breakfast add to the charms. Accommodations are bunk beds in clean, bright rooms (although it's 6–12 people per room). If you'd rather stay on the Lower East Side, you can request a dorm bed in the center's other location upon booking.

313 W. 29th St., just west of Eighth Ave. ✆ 212/643-0214. www.chelseacenterhostel.com. 20 dorm beds. $35 per night, includes continental breakfast and tax. Cash only. Subway: C/E to 23rd St. Other location: *Lower East Side*, Essex St., near Delancey St. (Exact address available upon arrival.) Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Chelsea International Hostel You can't do much better location-wise than these rooms clustered around a courtyard right in the heart of Chelsea. International travelers love this well-managed place. Your $32 to $36 includes taxes, lounge areas, self-service laundry, and free luggage storage. Bring your own towel.

251 W. 20th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ 212/647-0010. www.chelseahostel.com. 288 dorm beds. $32 per night. Subway: 1 to 18th St.

The Gershwin Hotel This hotel's high design, arty flair, and central location would seem to put it way out of budget reaches, but a semi-secret cache of dorm spaces makes it quite accessible. The six-person Fabuloso room comes in under $55 a night once tax is accounted for, while the Auberge is under $42, although you'll be sharing your ceiling with nine other souls. FINE PRINT Linens are provided; bring your own towel for the Auberge.

7 E. 27th St., btw. Madison and Fifth aves. ✆ 212/545-8000. www.gershwinhotel.com. 60 dorm beds. Subway: 6 or N/R/W to 28th St.

Whitehouse Hotel of New York Not so long ago, a night on the Bowery didn't sound like a very glamorous prospect. With nearby trendy bars and restaurants popping up like post-rain mushrooms,

FREE Escape from New York

Artist Colonies Artists seeking a break from the more merciless elements of urban life can take advantage of rural escapes, several of which offer free stays. The most famous and prestigious of the colonies is **MacDowell,** in Petersborough, New Hampshire. Amazing names have been through the colony, and can still be found there today. It costs $20 to apply for a session and competition is fierce, but if you get through, room and board are covered for up to 8 weeks. Writers, visual artists, filmmakers, composers, and architects all interact during the sessions. www.macdowellcolony.org. ✆ **603/924-3886.** For information on other colonies as well as artist grant programs (free money), the **New York Foundation for the Arts** is a good place to start. Check the website, www.nyfa.org.

however, this youth-oriented reimagined flophouse is now right at party central. Spaces are tiny and unenclosed at the ceilings, and bathrooms are shared, but what do you expect for around $35 a night? Towels and A/C are included.

340 Bowery, btw. Second Ave. and Great Jones St. ✆ **212/477-5623.** www.whitehousehotelofny.com. 468 beds. $36 per night, tax included. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

Women's Residences

Members of the fairer sex can also take advantage of the cheap accommodations offered by women's residences. These throwbacks to a more genteel era generally don't allow gentleman callers above the parlor levels, nor do they permit boozing (some residences even have curfews). However, rates are lower than New York's multigender hotels, and for newcomers to the city it's a great way to make friends.

Centro Maria Operated by the Religious Sisters of Mary Immaculate, this Midtown West residence accepts women ages 18 to 27 for both short- and long-terms stays. Rooms are simple singles, doubles, and triples, and some come with private bathrooms. Night owls won't be happy with the curfew (11:30pm on weekdays, midnight on weekends), but what you lack in basic freedom you make up for in money saved; prices include two meals a day on weekdays, and one meal on

Saturday. Residents supply their own bed linens and towels. There's an $80 nonrefundable registration fee, and applications must be accompanied by two letters of recommendation and a photograph. Try to apply 1 month in advance.

539 W. 54th St., btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ 212/757-6989. 80 beds. Daily rate: $55 single, with shared bathroom; $40 per person double. Weekly rate (minimum stay 4 weeks): $190 single with shared bathroom; $165 per person double. Facilities: Shared bath; maid service; limited kitchen; TV room; recreational room; chapel; laundry. Subway: C/E to 50th St.; A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St.–Columbus Circle.

Markle Evangeline Residence Built by the Salvation Army in 1930, the Markle has been providing women with a viable alternative to the New York housing mire for 75 years. The rules are predictably strict—no alcohol, no smoking, no men under 55 inside—and the rooms will never be described as spacious, but a resident gets her own fully furnished bedroom with private bathroom, and two squares a day, 5 days a week. Access to a TV room, computer labs, a rooftop garden, and organized social activities help justify the somewhat higher rates. ***Note:*** More communal souls can save cash by opting for shared doubles or quads, which charge lower rates. Summer student residents under 16 must have a female parent or guardian reside with them. Non-student residents must be between 18 and 35. Two references, an application, and a security deposit of $1,500 to $1,600 are required for long-term stays.

123 W. 13th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/242-2400. www.themarkle.org. Long-term monthly (minimum 31 days): $1,275–$1,395 single; $1,070–$1,620 double; $920–$940 quad. Facilities: Private bathroom; in-room telephone; 24-hr. security; maid service (once a week); roof garden; computer lab; TV lounge; laundry. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.

4 Beauty & Massage

HAIR TODAY

NYC's hirsute astute take advantage of salon training sessions. Both students and pros need live heads to demonstrate on, and in exchange for your modeling they'll provide all kinds of services for little or no money. Though there's no guarantee you'll get an expert cut, a lot of salon students in New York have the scissor skills to eclipse the masters. In addition to cuts, coloring services are sometimes available. Some salons want to look you over first (it helps if you've got a sympathetic face and a surplus of hair begging for a snipping), but

generally it's pretty easy to get your grooming on the house. ***Note:*** Many salons need models, but not all like to advertise it. If you've got your eye on a prohibitively expensive spot, give them a call and see if they can use you.

Salon Stylings

Aveda Institute New York The popular environmentally conscious spa Aveda offers up its many services at deep discounts if you go through the students at the institute. Haircuts, coloring, blowouts, perms, facials, and waxing are all available. The prices aren't dirt cheap ($20 for a cut and simple style), but they're relative bargains compared to the rest of the neighborhood. You can get work done for free by acting as a model during the Aveda Academy classes. Registration is Wednesdays and Thursdays from noon to 1pm and 6 to 7pm; you must be at least 18 years old.

Institute, 233 Spring St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Varick St. ✆ **212/807-1492.** www.avedainstituteny.com. Subway: C/E to Spring St. *Academy,* 20 Vandam St., btw. Sixth Ave. and Varick St. ✆ **212/524-2424.** Subway: C/E to Spring St.; 1 to Houston St.

Bumble and bumble.University FREE The old-school butchers would never have believed it, but the Meat-Packing District is now style central in Manhattan. The slick new Bumble and bumble salon is right in the thick of it, but you can partake of the services for no money down. Their stylist training program puts on model calls twice a month on Mondays for heads of hair deemed worthy in pre-evaluation (fill out the form online to wangle your invitation). If you make it through, they'll fuss over you for 2 hours or so, leaving you with a new cut and style. Once you're in the program, you can stay tapped into the gravy train with a follow-up cut every 3 or 4 months. You must be willing to get more than a trim, though they'll consult with you first to figure out what works. Tips aren't even necessary.

415 W. 13th St., 6th floor, btw. Ninth Ave. and Washington St. ✆ **866/7-BUMBLE** [728-6253]. www.bbmodelproject.com. Subway: A/C/E or L to Eighth Ave./14th St.

Christine Valmy International School of Esthetics, Makeup and Nail Artistry What you give up in experience, you gain in price here. Facials are a great deal. Instructors do the supervising while students do the work. A full hour and a half facial is only $27 if you come in between 9:30am and 3:30pm on a weekday (call a week ahead for an appointment).

437 Fifth Ave., btw. 38th and 39th sts. ✆ **212/779-7800.** www.christinevalmy.com. Subway: 7 to Fifth Ave.; 6 to 33rd St.

Clairol Product Evaluation Salon FREE Become a product-testing guinea pig here and you'll receive free Clairol hair coloring from a professional stylist. The first step is to get an appointment for a half-hour interview. Appointments are available Monday through Friday from 9:30 to 11am and again from 1:30 to 4pm. If you're accepted, you can come back once a month—some people have been taking advantage for years. Only the stylist will know for sure. Both men and women are accepted, but you have to be at least 18.

345 Park Ave., lobby level, btw. 51st and 52nd sts. ✆ **646/885-4200.** Subway: 6 to 51st St.; E/V to 53rd St.–Lexington.

L'Oréal FREE L'Oréal's Matrix Technical Salon tests out coloring and styling products. If you make it through an interview, you can join in the experiment. Interviews are conducted Monday through Thursday from 8:30am to 1pm and 2 to 3:30pm. Women should have middle-length hair; men are also used for some studies. If you're accepted, you'll get a free coloring and follow-up visits if the study requires them. You can also sign up for the Consumer Expressions Research Center (✆ **212/984-4164;** www.cercny.com), where you can test L'Oréal from home. Participants get free gift bags of products at the end of the trial, although the test products have to be returned lest they fall into enemy hands. You'll also score a guest pass to shop at the L'Oréal company store, where beauty products (including the ever-popular Kiehl's) are offered at a big discount. Downtown seekers can find a free testing facility at the L'Oréal Professional Soho Academy. Hair models receive hair coloring, styling, cutting, and relaxer services. Evaluations are conducted Monday through Thursday from 9am to 1pm and 2 to 4pm.

Matrix Technical Salon, 575 Fifth Ave., 3rd floor, at 47th St. ✆ **212/984-4926.** Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center. *L'Oréal Professional Soho Academy*, 15 Mercer St., btw. Grand and Howard sts. ✆ **212/966-1365.** Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Matrix Global Academy FREE Cutting, coloring, and styling top the curriculum here. And where there are students, the need for hair models can't be far behind. There's no cost for cuts and coloring. To try out, stop by between 9am and 5pm on a weekday to fill out a contact form and have your picture taken. You'll be contacted when models are needed.

The Dealin' Barbers of Cheap Street

Barber colleges offer cut-rate cuts. The level of experience varies, however, from student to student, so I don't recommend going for anything too tricky. In fact, you might limit these visits to summertime—when hair grows back its quickest.

American Barber Institute Haircuts are only $4.99 here, though you'll have to sign a waiver before going under the shears. Cuts are available Monday through Friday 8:15am to 7pm, and for men only on Saturday 9am to 7pm. 252 W. 29th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/290-2289.** www.americanbarberinstitute.com. Subway: 1 to 28th St.

Astor Place Hairstylist The sprawling three-floor setup here has been consolidated to just a single basement, but you can still find a dizzying array of barbers and hairstylists. Cuts are professional, and more stylish than you might expect for $14. (Astor Place has had charge of my locks for years, and I look like a million bucks.) Open Monday to Saturday 8am to 8pm, and Sunday 9am to 6pm. 2 Astor Place, btw. Broadway and Lafayette St. ✆ **212/475-9854.** www.astorplacehairnyc.com. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place.

435 Hudson St., btw. Leroy and Morton sts. ✆ **800/805-7094.** www.matrix.com. Subway: 1 to Houston St.

New York International Beauty School The salon here will swap service for experience, as trainees learn best on live bodies. Simple haircuts are less than $6, with a full-on blow-dry averaging $15. Highlighting, braiding, and facials are among the other services on offer. Walk-ins only, weekdays from 9am to 2pm and 6 to 7pm.

500 Eighth Ave., btw. 35th and 36th sts. ✆ **212/868-7171.** www.nyibs.com. Subway: A/C/E to 34th St./Penn Station.

Salon Ziba FREE Every Monday morning at 10:30am, this upscale-ish salon puts on a cutting class, led by a senior stylist. Send them a picture of your hair and if you're suitable they'll give you a free salon cut. The program is mostly for men, but they do have use for women's hair as well.

Atlas Barber School Both men's and women's stylings are only $5. Feeling lucky? Try out a student shave for just $2. Open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 5pm. 34 Third Ave., btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **212/475-1360.** www.atlasbarbersch.com. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

You can get cheap cuts from pros, too. The cuts will run you a bit more, but you can rest easier knowing the scissors are in experienced hands.

Kelly Hair Salon Pell Street has turned into a Chinatown beauty row, with cheap nail and hair work available up and down the block. This salon (daily 9am–7pm) does big-volume business without losing a personal touch; cuts start at $7 for men and $10 for women. 19 Pell St., btw. Doyers and Mott sts. ✆ **212/732-7688.** Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Lee Lee Beauty and Hair Salon This cheap-chop shop offers cuts starting at just $7, and you can augment for not much more. Note that those with straight hair may get the most reliable results. Open daily 9am to 7:30pm. 12 Pell St., btw. the Bowery and Doyers St. ✆ **212/528-1381.** Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

200 W. 57th St., at Seventh Ave. ✆ **212/767-0577.** www.salonziba.com. Subway: N/Q/R/W to 57th St.

Instant Massaging

Swedish Institute College of Health Sciences Swedish massage has been around for a couple of centuries now, but you don't need to travel all the way to Stockholm to improve your circulation. Since its founding by a Swede in 1916, this institution has dedicated itself to natural approaches to health, which it makes available to the public at reduced rates. You'll be worked on by a student, but they're very well trained. Two clinical programs are offered, stress-reduction (for the healthy) and therapeutic massage (for people with medical conditions). The former program provides six 1-hour sessions for $150, and the latter is 12 hours in 12 weeks for $250. Both programs are very popular, so registration is by mail only. Call the P. H. Ling

Clinic at ✆ **212/924-5900** (ext. 6208) and leave your name and address, or download the form from the website.

226 W. 26th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ 212/924-5900. www.swedishinstitute.edu. Subway: 1 to 28th St.

Wu Lin Services Massages are yet another bargain that can be found in New York's cheap alternative universe of Chinatown. A bunch of places will work out your kinks, and a few of them can combine it with acupuncture, acupressure, and herbal medicine. One place I like is Wu Lin Services, which will knead away your cares while you keep your clothes on. Ten minutes are $10, 16 minutes are $15, and a full hour's massage is $42.

145 Grand St., btw. Crosby and Lafayette sts. ✆ 212/925-1276. Daily 10:30am–10:30pm. Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

5 Recreation in the City

BIKE GANGS

Biking makes a virtue of New York's hard paved surfaces, turning our miles of roadway into recreational opportunities. One of the best ways to take advantage is by banding up with fellow riders. If you're not yet of the wheeled class, consider checking out **Recycle-A-Bicycle.** This nonprofit sells refurbished rides at low prices from two retail locations (p. 210).

Fast and Fab Whether you're a fast rider or a fabulous rider, or both, this LGBT biking group will welcome you. Annual membership is $30 ($20 if you join after May 1, and only $10 after Sept 1), but it'll get you invites to a series of rides around the city and out of town (say, a day trip to DIA Beacon). Intermediate cyclists are the target group. Meals and socializing often follow the rides.

✆ 212/567-7160. www.fastnfab.org.

Five Borough Bicycle Club FREE This friendly club hosts a slew of day trips in and around the city. Beaches, the Bronx greenways, and Woodlawn Cemetery are among the attractions. The club runs some great tune-ups (as long as 90 miles) leading up to the 100 miles of the annual Montauk Century ride in May. Registration isn't necessary; just show up with water, wheels, and lunch money. Day rides are free. A year's dues to join the club aren't particularly onerous at $20.

✆ 212/932-2300, ext. 115. www.5bbc.org.

FREE NYC's All Skate

The Dead Road in Central Park is one of my favorite spots in the city for a workout (well, an eyeball workout to be completely accurate). Watching dozens of expert roller skaters and bladers dancing and spinning to a jamming disco beat is a hypnotic sight. Some of the regulars have been rolling together for more than 2 decades and the skill level is very high, but if you're halfway competent you shouldn't feel intimidated. The scene is friendly and inclusive, so strap on some wheels and jump in. Even for nonskaters, this event is a highlight of the park. The DJs are great, especially now that the city has relented on its antibeat campaign. (In 1995, music was temporarily banned from the park so skaters wore Walkmen all tuned to the same radio channel, creating a surreal silent choreography.) The outdoor roller disco is in session from 2:30 to 6:30pm most Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays between mid-April and October. For specifics about dates and DJs, check the Central Park Dance Skater's Association's website (**www.cpdsa.org**). The Dead Road is in the middle of the park, between 66th and 69th streets, just a little southwest of the Bethesda Fountain.

If skating in a boogielicious roller inferno is a little daunting to you, find safety in numbers with Wednesday Night Skate (www.weskateny.org). New York's biggest skating event wheels away from Union Square Park every Wednesday night. The routes vary from week to week, but generally you'll get to see a few miles' worth of NYC, say up Park Avenue, into Central Park, and back on over to Times Square. The event usually lasts 2 hours. The flock meets at the south end of Union Square Park at 7:45pm, from April to October. Helmets and wrist guards are required before you turn yourself into a vehicle.

Time's Up FREE This environmental group sponsors several well-organized rides. The most well known is **Critical Mass,** held on the last Friday of every month and taking place simultaneously in over 300 cities worldwide. The ride is designed to raise consciousness about environmental alternatives and biker rights. It's fun for sidewalk spectators, too, who can watch every kind of bike and bike-rider

FREE Outdoor Gaming

"Geek Olympics" is probably an unfair way of summarizing the **Come Out & Play** street game festival. Technology does lend a major hand, with laptops and cellphones performing various tracking functions, but the event is more about playful use of public space than Internet addicts blinking their eyes against the harsh imposition of daylight. Urban mini golf, human Pong, and citywide scavenger hunts are among the draws, which fill a long weekend, usually in June. Check www.comeoutandplay.org for a schedule of games, or to volunteer one of your own. ✆ **646/644-1995;** various locations.

pedal past to a chorus of perversely gratifying taxi horns. The route varies, often starting from Union Square (the Brooklyn version goes off the second Fri of the month). Time's Up also hosts rides on tri-state rural routes, but the best trip to the country comes on the first Friday of the month. The **Central Park Moonlight Ride** shows off the water and trees and general tranquillity of the park at night. With guides riding point and taking up the rear, it's a safe and leisurely pedal. Rollerbladers with at least intermediate skills are welcome, too. The ride meets at 10pm at the southwest corner of Central Park, across from Columbus Circle. The trip is around 10 miles, and runs all 12 months of the year. A Prospect Park Moonlight Ride has also been recently added. At the new Time's Up headquarters you can find bike repair workshops (some geared to ladies), and Thursday nights at 8pm you can catch progressive films at the Time's Up HQ. All events are free, although as a volunteer-run organization, donations are cheerfully accepted.

73 Morton St., btw. Greenwich and Hudson sts. ✆ **212/802-8222.** www.times-up.org. Subway: 1 to Houston St.

GYM NEIGHBORS

When hauling groceries and laundry up to your sixth-floor walk-up is no longer exercise regimen enough, it's time to hit a gym. The cheapest choice by far is signing up with the department of parks and recreation, though other options that don't much exceed $1 a day are available. If you want to shop around first, the website **www.gymsearch.net** has free coupons and guest passes for gyms around the region. It's free, but you have to register your contact info.

Department of Parks and Recreation On top of playing fields and courts, the city also runs 29 recreation centers. The amenity list is long and varied, including indoor and outdoor tracks, weight rooms, dance studios, and boxing rings. All of this can be yours for only $50 a year. If you want to join a center with a pool, it's an additional $25. (For seniors age 55 and over, it's only $10 a year with or without pools, and for under-18s, it's all free.) Many centers also offer classes in Pilates, aerobics, karate, kickboxing, wrestling, swimming, and the like. Some centers even have personal trainers. Usually an extra fee applies for classes, say $5 for an hour of yoga instruction. The scene varies from rec center to rec center, but generally they're family-friendly and community oriented. You won't find classic meat markets in most of these city-run facilities.

✆ **212/360-8222.** www.nycgovparks.org.

OTOM Gym Physical Culture In addition to the Y below, Greenpoint residents have this large, affordable gym. A year's membership is $449. Night owls can take advantage of a late-night special, $309 per year for limited nighttime access Monday through Thursday and normal hours on the weekends.

169 Calyer St., btw. Lorimer St. and Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/383-2800.** www.otomgymny.com. Open 24 hr., except closed Fri midnight to Sat 7am and Sat midnight to Sun 7am. Subway: G to Greenpoint Ave.

24-7 Fitness Club This round-the-clock club is rough around the edges, but it's hard to beat on cost and convenience. There's a ton of machines, and it tends not to be overly crowded.

47 W. 14th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/206-1504.** www.24-7fitnessnyc.com. Subway: F/V to 14th St., L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

YMCA of Greater New York The Y (✆ **212/630-9600;** www.ymcanyc.org) runs 20 health and wellness centers in the five boroughs. The facilities vary from site to site, but the general roster includes gyms, pools, racquetball and handball courts, aerobics studios, exercise machines, steam rooms, and saunas. Fees vary. The state-of-the-art facility is the new McBurney location (125 W. 14th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves.; F/V or L to Sixth Ave./14th St., or 1/2/3 to 14th St.; ✆ **212/741-9210**). A 1-year membership is $1,032, plus the $125 initiation fee. To get fit at a less central location is a much better deal—the Greenpoint YMCA (99 Meserole Ave., btw. Leonard

St. and Manhattan Ave.; G to Nassau Ave. or Greenpoint Ave.; ✆ **718/389-3700**) is only $594 for a year, with a $75 initiation fee.

CHEAP SKATES

The Pond at Bryant Park FREE Frank J. Zamboni's brainchild smoothes the ice on this ingenious use of Bryant Park's center. Surrounded by the boutique stalls of the Holiday Shops, the ice-skating rink has a European small-town feel. Thanks to the bottomless pockets of Citi, skating is free, though folks whose skates are hanging by their laces in their parents' garages will have to plunk down $10 per session for rentals. The rink is open from late October through mid-January.

Bryant Park, btw. W. 40th and 42nd sts., along Sixth Ave. ✆ **866/221-5157.** www.thepondatbryantpark.com. Daily 8am–10pm, until midnight Fri–Sat. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

POOLING RESOURCES

It costs $75 a year to use the city's indoor pools (see "Gym Neighbors," above), but if you're a frequent crawler, the price turns out to be pretty reasonable. There are 54 outdoor pools scattered across the city, and they're free and open to the public (most keep hours of 11am–7pm). The indoor pools stay open year-round (unless they're superseded by an on-site outdoor pool), but the tubs under the sun synch up with the school year. Late June to Labor Day is the usual season, and you will find many, many kids taking advantage. In addition to the city pools (**www.nycgovparks.org**), the state runs an Olympic-size natatorium in Manhattan. Local favorites include:

Asser Levy An indoor and outdoor pool make this a great year-round swimming destination.

E. 23rd St. and Asser Levy Place, near the FDR Dr. ✆ **212/447-2020.** Pool Mon–Wed, Fri 7am–10pm; Thurs 7am–9:30pm; Sat–Sun 8am–4:45pm. Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

Astoria Park Pool This is one of largest (designed to hold some 2,000 swimmers) and most famous pools in the country. Built in 1936 through the WPA, it features stunning skyline and bridge views.

Astoria Park, 19th St. at 23rd Dr., Astoria, Queens. ✆ **718/626-8620.** Daily 11am–7pm. Subway: N/W to Astoria–Ditmars Blvd.

Floating Pool A decommissioned river barge in Morgan City, Louisiana, provided the raw material for this popular city freebie. Some 50,000 swim fans visited during 2007's inaugural year, when

the pool was parked in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge. Then '08 brought the chlorine dreams up to Barretto Point Park in the Bronx. Check online for current coordinates.

www.floatingpool.org. Mon–Fri 11am–7pm, Sat–Sun 9am–7pm.

Hamilton Fish Despite its enormous size, this Lower East Side outdoor pool fills up quickly. Kids from the neighborhood splash while parents relax in the spacious adjoining plaza.

128 Pitt St., btw. E. Houston and Stanton sts. ✆ 212/387-7687. General swimming, Mon–Fri noon–3pm, 4–6:45pm; Sat–Sun noon–3pm, 4–7pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Metropolitan Pool Williamsburg is kept buoyant at the indoor Met Pool, which still gleams from a recent multimillion-dollar renovation.

261 Bedford Ave., at Metropolitan Ave. ✆ 718/599-5707. Pool general hours (adult swimming is limited; check in advance) Mon–Fri 7am–9:30pm; Sat 7am–3:30pm; Sun 10am–5:15pm. Subway: L to Bedford Ave.

Riverbank State Park This 28-acre park on the Hudson ably disguises its foundation, which is a wastewater treatment plant. The indoor pool here is run by the state, which charges $2 per visit.

679 Riverside Dr., at 145th St. ✆ 212/694-3600. www.nysparks.state.ny.us. Pool general hours (adult swimming is limited; check in advance) Mon–Fri 6:30am–8:15pm; Sat–Sun 6:30am–6pm. Subway: 1 to 145th St.

Tony Dapolito Recreation Center Another pool with both indoor and outdoor bases covered, this rec center is a long-time West Village fave.

1 Clarkson St., btw. Seventh Ave. S. and Hudson St. ✆ 212/242-5228. Outdoor pool July–Aug, indoor pool Sept–June; hours vary, call ahead. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

OM, MY GOODNESS: MEDITATION

In a town so loud it can be hard to hear one's own thoughts, the contrast of a quiet meditation space can be startling. Though just about any house of worship in the city will suffice, sometimes it's nice to get a little guidance for inner journeying.

Kagyu Dzamling Kunchab FREE This Tibetan organization brings the east to the west (side), with a traditional Dharma practice led by an ordained lama. Wednesday nights are open to the public for meditation, followed by a Buddhist teaching and Chenrezi practice. The

evenings run from 6:30 to 9:15pm, but you can stay for as much of it as you'd like. The event is free, although as a general principle generosity is encouraged.

410 Columbus Ave., btw. 79th and 80th sts. ✆ **212/989-5989.** www.kdk-nyc.org. Subway: B/C to 81st St.; 1 to 79th St.

Shambhala Two lovely meditation rooms host the open meditations offered by this Tibetan Buddhist group. Beginners can learn more at weekly lessons, Wednesdays at 6pm and Sundays at noon. Every Tuesday night at 7pm is the weekly dharma gathering, which is a half-hour of group meditation followed by a talk, a discussion, and a reception. Suggested donations for most events are $10.

118 W. 22nd St., 6th floor, btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/675-6544.** www.ny.shambhala.org. Subway: 1 or F/V to 23rd St.

The Three Jewels Community Center FREE To further the teachings of the Buddha, this impressive organization offers much of its programming for free. In conjunction with the Asian Classics Institute, you can find a wide range of classes, many of which are suited to beginners. There are also meditation sessions, with on-hand instructors to help conduct them. The main loft near Astor Place houses a combination dharma, yoga, meditation, and outreach center. Check the calendar for the latest schedule (some offerings, like yoga, do come with a charge).

61 Fourth Ave., 3rd floor, btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **212/475-6650.** www.threejewels.org. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Zen Center of New York City Discover what one hand clapping sounds like at this Zen center in Brooklyn. Contributions are requested to participate in the meditation sessions (generally $3–$5), which are held almost every day. If you're new to zazen, you can attend an introductory session on a Sunday morning. Sessions start at 10am and last around 3 hours. Admission is by a suggested contribution of $5.

500 State St., btw. Nevins and Third Ave., Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/875-8229.** www.mro.org/firelotus. Subway: 2/3/4/5/B/Q to Atlantic Ave.; 4/5 to Nevins; D/M/N/R to Pacific; A/C/G to Hoyt-Schermerhorn.

WATERSPORTS

New York's waterways were once great recreational resources, but years of environmental laxity made much of the local liquid too toxic to touch. A handful of burgeoning groups are trying to speed along

the rivers' rebounds with giveaways along the shore. The East River, Hudson, and Gowanus are all available for seaworthy (or at least sea-curious) New Yorkers.

Brooklyn Bridge Park FREE The cove between the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges has about as spectacular a view as can be found in NYC. To enjoy the skyline rippling on the water, take advantage of this new boating program, which runs on select weekends in August and September. The voyages are first-come, first-served, aboard kayaks, canoes, and rowboats. FINE PRINT All equipment is provided, but you must know how to swim.

Brooklyn Bridge Park, near Main and Plymouth sts., DUMBO, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/802-0603.** www.brooklynbridgepark.org. Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.

Downtown Boathouse FREE If you know how to swim, you're eligible for free Hudson paddling. Out of the goodness of their hearts (and a desire to promote the Hudson as a recreational outlet), this group loans out kayaks and equipment all summer long. Some 50,000 people get out on the river between mid-May and mid-October. The trips are limited to 20 minutes in protected areas near three west-side piers, but if you show up a few times and get into shape, you'll be eligible for a long paddle from Pier 96 into New York Harbor. This spectacular field trip lasts 3 hours, with unbelievable views all the way. Potential paddlers gather before 8am and wait to have names picked from a hat. On a nice day you've got about a 50/50 chance of going, though you can increase your odds by arriving on a day with cloud cover. The long-trip season runs mid-June to mid-September (call ✆ **646/613-0740** to check the daily status; in really lousy weather the kayaks stay docked). The Hudson is cleaner than it's been for decades, so getting splashed here and there no longer requires immediate hospitalization.

Pier 96, Clinton Cove Park, West Side Hwy., at 56th St. ✆ **646/613-0375.** www.downtownboathouse.org. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle. 9am–6pm weekends and holidays; weekday evenings mid-June through Aug, 5–7pm. *Pier 40,* at Houston St. and the Hudson. 9am–6pm weekends and holidays. Subway: 1 to Houston; A/C/E to Canal St. *Riverside Park,* 72nd St., at the Hudson. 10am–5pm weekends and holidays. Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.

The Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club FREE The Gowanus Canal is in a transitional phase between being the butt of jokes and serving as a genteel Brooklyn natural resource. A canoe trip here still leans

toward the former, providing a surreal float through what is mostly a forgotten industrial wasteland. Equipment is loaned out on select weekends and holidays. Guided tours that run down to the Gowanus Bay are available by appointment. The season lasts from late March through the end of October. Pickup is near 2nd Street and Bond Street in Brooklyn, but check the calendar for availability details first. For landlubbers, the Dredgers also offer free bike tours. There's no charge for any of these programs, but as this is a grassroots organization, every little bit of generosity helps.

Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/243-0849. www.gowanuscanal.org. Event hours vary; call for times. Subway: F/G to Smith/9th St.

L.I.C. Community Boathouse FREE The East River (it's not really a river; it's a tidal strait) is also open to experienced and newbie paddlers alike. Select Sunday afternoons from 1 to 5pm you can get out on the Queens waterfront (there are also occasional forays to other boroughs). The kayak tours require an advance appointment; you can get a walk-up canoe or kayak ride from Hallets Cove. Check the website for a calendar. The shore here is pretty industrial, but as a tidal strait the possibilities of porpoise and whale sightings are significantly greater than they are on the Hudson.

***Kayak tours,* L.I.C Community Boathouse at Anable Cove, Hunters Point, Queens. 44th Drive and the East River. ✆ 718/228-9214. www.licboathouse.org. Event hours vary; call for times. Subway: 7 to Vernon-Jackson; E/V to 23rd St./Ely Ave.; G to 45th Rd./Court Square. *Walk-up canoes and kayaks,* L.I.C Community Boathouse at Hallets Cove, Astoria, Queens. 31st Ave. and the East River. Subway: N/W to Broadway.**

Red Hook Boaters FREE Native red clay is the origin of this Brooklyn outlier's name (*Roode Hoek* in Dutch), which is rapidly gentrifying thanks to the new IKEA and a host of restaurants and bars. One great way to explore the area is via the Red Hook Boaters, a group dedicated to maintaining local waterfront access and raising general aquatic awareness. Their free programs offer canoes and kayaks for 15- to 20-minute runs into the protected area near Louis Valentino, Jr., Pier Park. In return, they ask that you pitch in with beach cleanup before or after (gloves, trash bags, and life jackets are all provided, in addition to boats). When you've logged some time as a volunteer, you can make an appointment to join in on an open-water tour of Governors Island, Brooklyn Bridge Park, or the Buttermilk Channel.

The beach at Louis Valentino, Jr., Pier Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn, near Coffey and Ferris sts. ✆ **917/676-6458.** www.redhookboaters.org. Event hours vary; call for times. Subway: F/G to Smith/9th St.

YOGA & TAI CHI

New York offers several free and dirt-cheap classes in tai chi and yoga. Tai chi has been slow to gather momentum as a trend, but yoga is well entrenched as the aerobics of the naughts. It's a good idea to wear comfortable clothing for either type of class, and bring a mat or towel for yoga in the parks.

Battery Park City FREE From 8:30 to 9:30am on most Fridays in summer you can get a master's guidance in tai chi at Battery Park's Esplanade Plaza (at the end of Liberty St.).

Battery Park City, along South End Ave., just west of West St. ✆ **212/267-9700.** www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C to Chambers St.; 1 to Rector St. or South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

Brooklyn Bridge Park FREE Torso stabilization is the goal here, in classes led by a fitness guru and guress. The technique is Pilates mat work, and all skill levels are welcome. Registration begins at 6:30pm, the class starts at 7pm, and space is limited. Class is held on the boardwalk of Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park, moving to the Tobacco Warehouse in case of rain.

Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. ✆ **718/802-0603.** www.brooklynbridgepark.org. Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.

Bryant Park FREE Bryant Park loans its central location to a host of activities, most notably a Thursday morning tai chi class. The class is taught from 7:30 to 8:30am, May to October, so you can focus your energy before punching the clock. If you're new to the practice, World Tai Chi Day might be the thing for you. On the last Saturday in April, Bryant Park is the site of a day of classes and demonstrations. Thursday evenings (6–7pm) are dedicated to yoga. From June until late August, on the southwest corner of the lawn, you can salute the setting sun and improve your flexibility. (As an added bonus, you can also take a knitting class on Monday afternoons between mid-June and October; call ✆ **212/387-0707** to register or get more information.)

Bryant Park, btw. 41st and 42nd sts., and Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/768-4242.** www.bryantpark.org. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

Om Yoga Om Yoga provides an introduction to yoga for beginners for only $5. This drop-in class explains the basics of alignment, breathing, and stretching. The class lasts about 90 minutes and is held twice a month on a Saturday or Sunday, usually from 2 to 3:30pm.

826 Broadway, 6th floor, btw. 12th and 13th sts. ✆ **212/254-YOGA** [9642]. www.omyoga.com. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to Union Sq.

Riverside Park South FREE Unwind after work in Riverside Park, where hatha yoga for beginners is taught every Wednesday from 6:30 to 7:30pm. The "Evening Salute to the Sun" class meets from early June to late September. Show up on a Tuesday and you'll be able to tone your muscles with a Pilates mat class. Hey, the art of contrology just might be the new yoga. Classes are from 6:30 to 7:30pm between mid-June and mid-August; bring your own mat.

Riverside Park, the Plaza at 66th St., at the Hudson. ✆ **212/408-0219.** www.riversideparkfund.org. Subway: 1 to 66th St.

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center FREE Once a month this yoga center introduces the community to their practice via an open house. The day begins at 10:30am with a lecture and demonstration, followed by a trial class, a vegetarian meal, and finally an introduction to meditation. If you don't have your own mat, bring a towel to place over one of their mats. Usually the second Saturday of the month.

243 W. 24th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/255-4560.** www.sivananda.org/ny. Subway: C/E or 1 to 23rd St.

6B Garden FREE This community garden was best known for the late Toy Tower, a soaring junk pile recently sent to its reward. The patch left behind is a beautiful pocket of green on the Lower East Side, and it opens its gates to the public for a handful of events. Yoga, tai chi workshops, meditation, films, slide shows, and poetry readings are all part of the schedule. The garden is open for greenery appreciation on the weekends from 1 to 6pm, April through October.

Corner of E. 6th St. and Ave. B. www.6bgarden.org. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Socrates Sculpture Park FREE With its East River locale and killer Manhattan views, this park is a lovely setting for classes. Kilipalu yoga is taught in two sessions on Saturdays, from 9:30 to 10:30am and 11am to noon, open to all levels. The course runs from May to late September, rain or shine. Those same months on Sundays

from 11am to noon you can get a free tai chi class, also suitable for all levels. More? How about Brazilian martial art Capoeira on Saturdays from noon to 1:30pm, or Pilates on May and June Sundays from 10 to 11am? Plus bike decorating, programs for kids, tours, live music, and movies (p. 56). Oh yeah, and sculpture workshops.

32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway, Long Island City, Queens. ✆ 718/956-1819. www.socratessculpturepark.org. Daily 10am–sunset. Subway: N/W to Broadway. Walk 8 blocks along Broadway toward the East River.

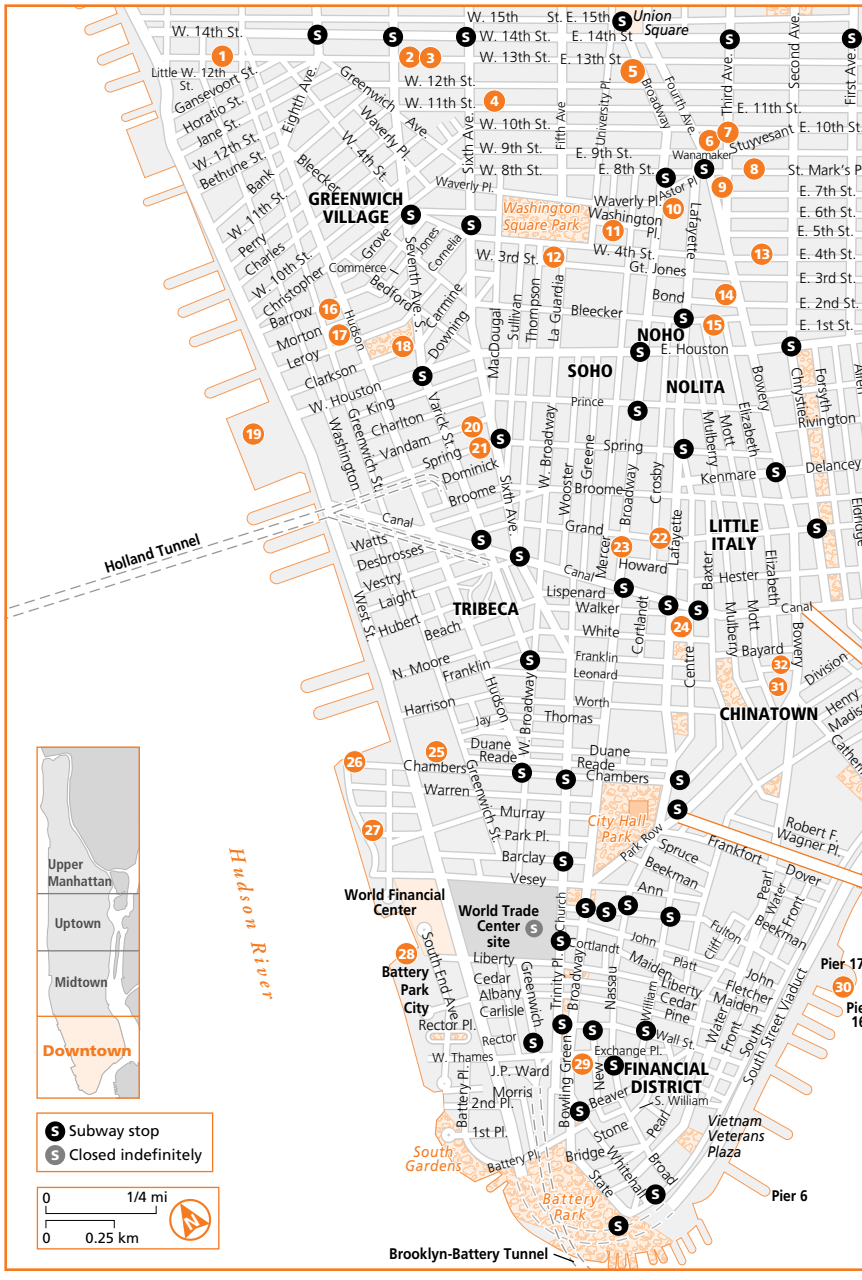
Union Square FREE The Union Square area has a spate of yoga spots, which take turns providing these free weekly classes. Thursdays at 3pm from late June through late August you'll find practitioners leading warrior forward bends and downward facing dogs. Classes are open to all ages and abilities.

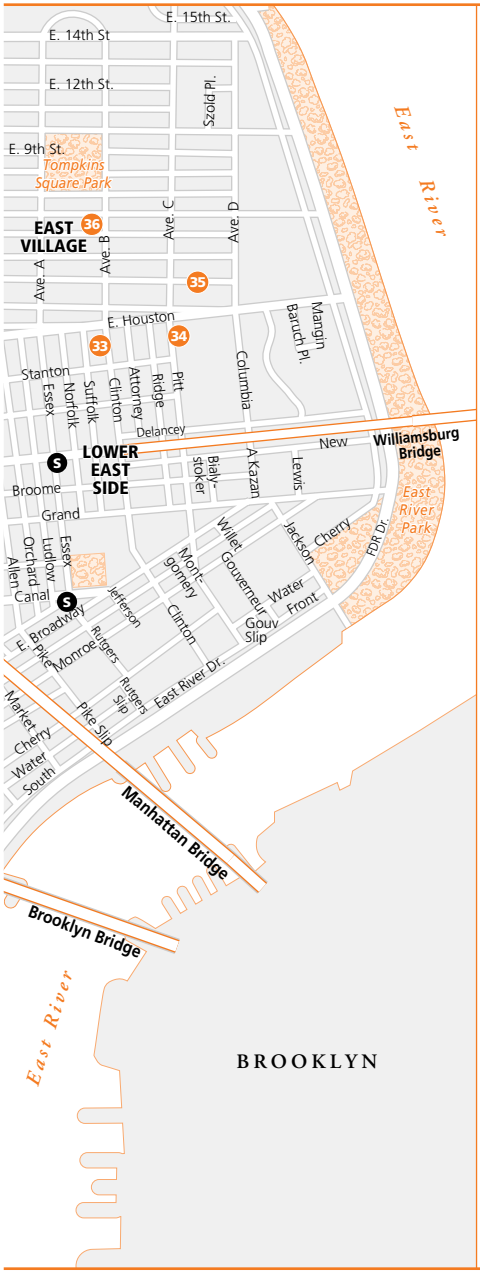
Union Square. ✆ 212/460-1200. www.unionsquarenyc.org. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Yoga to the People FREE As the name suggests, this organization seeks to return yoga to its grassroots origins, away from the pricey boutique practices. Each class comes with a suggested donation of $10, but nobody tracks it—the people pay what they can. Classes run seven days a week, with a special candlelit session on Sunday nights.

12 St. Marks Place, btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ 917/573-YOGA [9642]. www.yogatothepeople.com. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

DOWNTOWN LIVING





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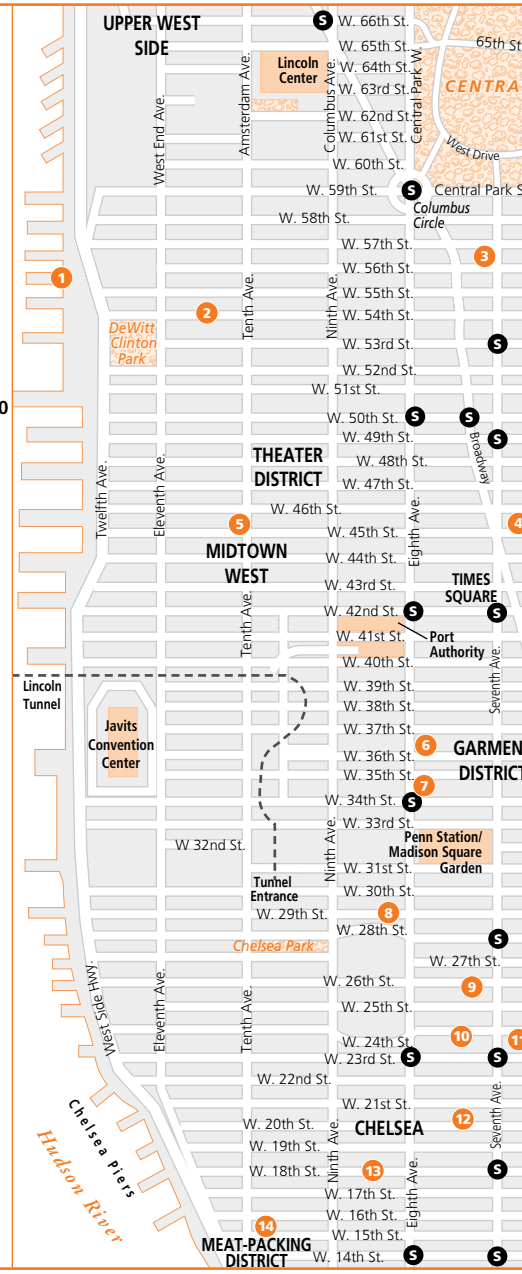

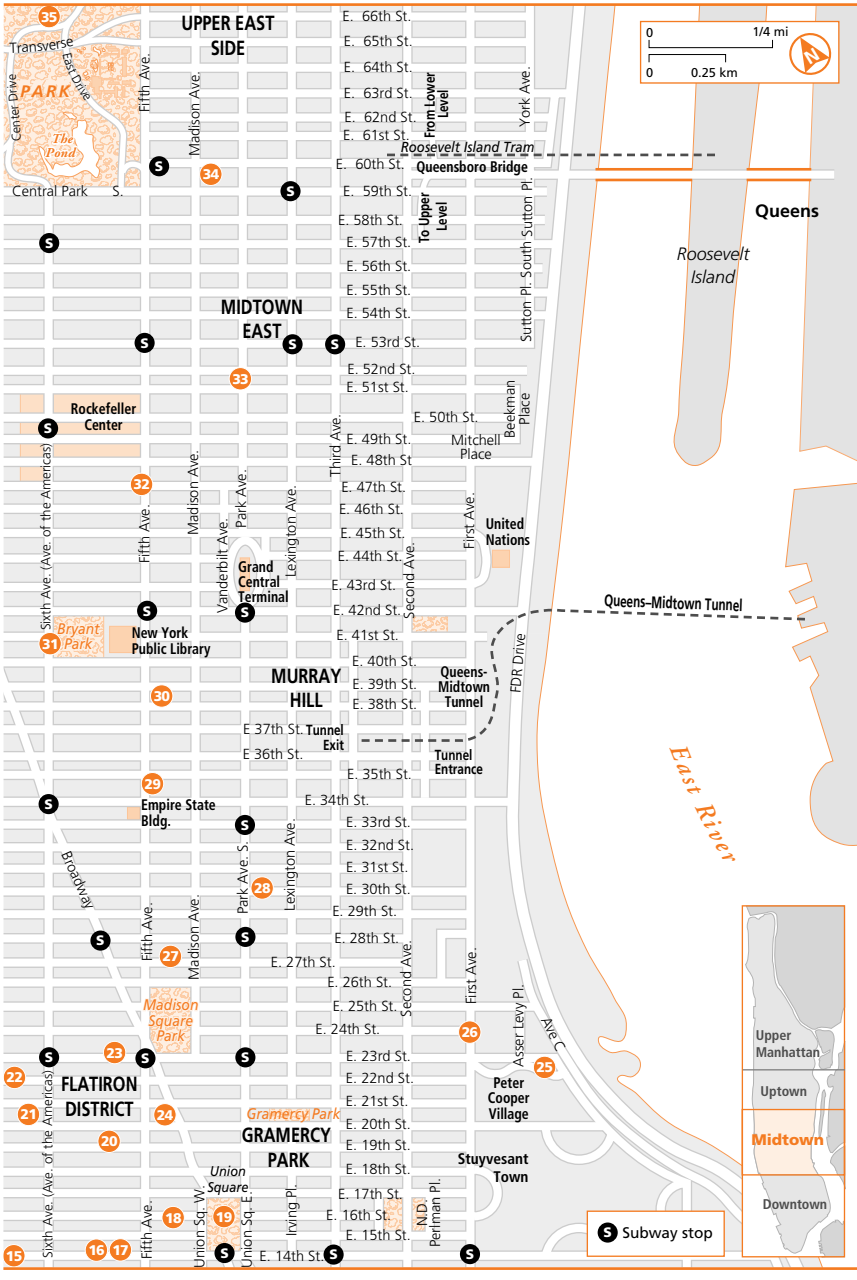
UPPER EAST SIDE
MIDTOWN EAST
MURRAY HILL
FLATIRON DISTRICT
GRAMERCY PARK
Queens
Roosevelt Island
East River
Central Park
Transverse
East Drive
Center Drive
The Pond
Fifth Ave.
Madison Ave.
Roosevelt Island Tram
Queensboro Bridge
From Lower Level
To Upper Level
York Ave.
Sutton Pl. South
Beekman Place
Mitchell Place
Third Ave.
First Ave.
Second Ave.
United Nations
Queens–Midtown Tunnel
FDR Drive
Queens-Midtown Tunnel
Tunnel Exit
Tunnel Entrance
Rockefeller Center
Sixth Ave. (Ave. of the Americas)
Bryant Park
New York Public Library
Grand Central Terminal
Vanderbilt Ave.
Park Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Empire State Bldg.
Broadway
Park Ave. S.
Madison Square Park
Gramercy Park
Union Square
Union Sq. W.
Union Sq. E.
Irving Pl.
N.D. Perlman Pl.
Asser Levy Pl.
Peter Cooper Village
Stuyvesant Town
E. 66th St.
E. 65th St.
E. 64th St.
E. 63rd St.
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Upper Manhattan
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Midtown
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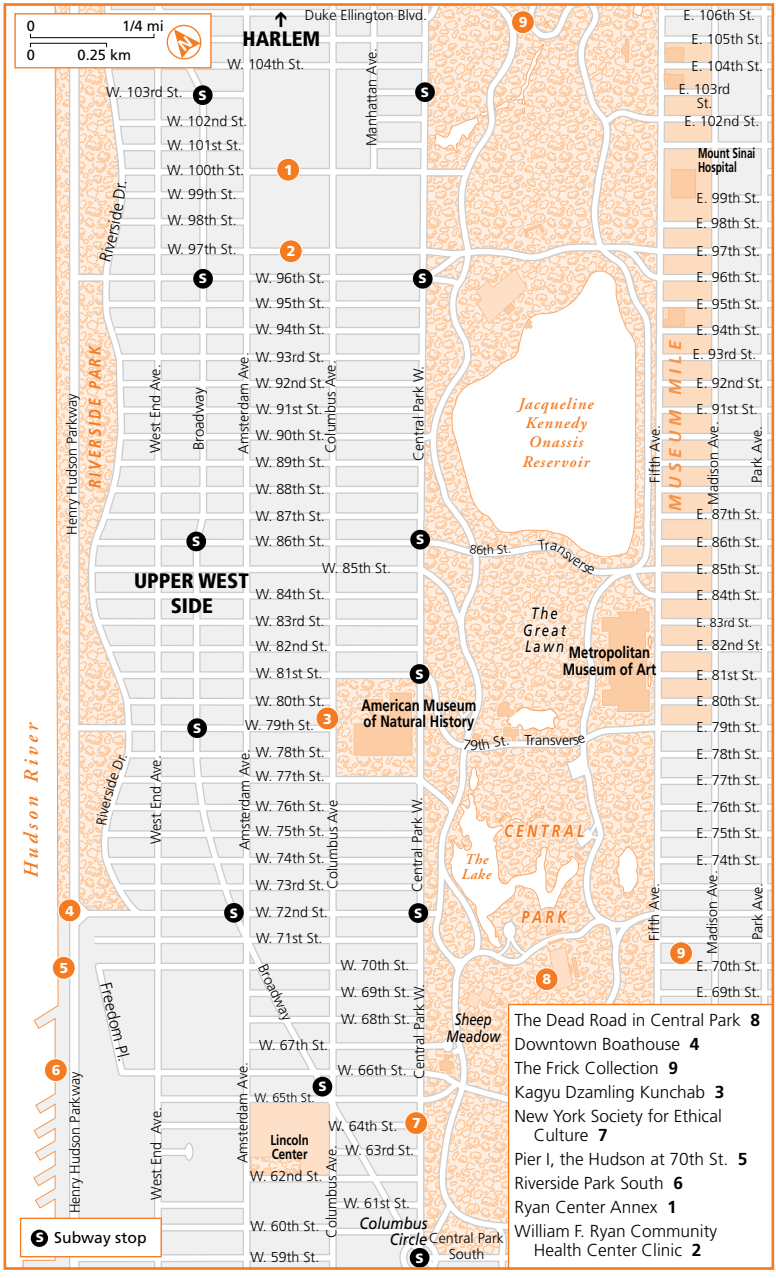
Subway stop

UPTOWN LIVING



On Sundays, Orchard Street closes to car traffic and cheap clothes deals fill the pavement of the Lower East Side "Bargain District." See p. 193 for more information.

5 SHOPPING

The last time my country friend came to visit I noticed him limping around the avenues of New York with a broken shoelace. I immediately tried to steer him into the nearest drugstore, but he resisted, telling me he didn't want to get slammed with those "big-city shoelace prices."

I still chuckle at this story when I'm scoring some crazy deal in the heart of the city. The volume advantage that eight million citizens provide can't be touched out in the sticks. Clothes, electronics, furniture, food, and, yes, even shoelaces, are available here for a fraction of their price in the hinterland. Plus Gotham's refined taste is great news

for the cost-conscious when it comes time for gowns and coffee tables to begin their second and third lives. New York thrift stores, flea markets, and curbside trash piles are all treasure troves for the patient and sharp-eyed, meaning savvy New Yorkers can finish off their cheap shopping lists better than anybody else in the US of A. Which is helpful when your rent bill ensures you're living on a shoestring.

1 Dirt Cheap Shopping Zones

Maybe I was dozing through my Capitalism 101 classes, but I don't understand why New York stores of similar stripe all jam themselves into the exact same neighborhood. The Bowery is dotted with restaurant supply shops, and then suddenly every storefront is dedicated to lighting. Lampshade shops gather on nearby side streets. Whatever the initial cause, the effect of the single-product density is bargaining power galore for the consumer. Don't like the price? Walk next door and see if you can't do a little better.

DOWNTOWN

The Financial District

Come lunchtime downtown, the streets fill with office workers scurrying around the cheap shopping outlets. **Fulton, Nassau,** and **Chambers** streets are big destinations, although there isn't anything here that can't be found in other places in the city. The two exceptions to that rule are the city's best electronics and best clothes stores, both near City Hall (see "Department Stores for Cheapskates" and "Electronics," later in this chapter).

Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau; N/R/W to City Hall; 6 to Brooklyn Bridge/City Hall.

Chinatown

A trip to Chinatown can feel like a visit to a foreign country. What I like even better is the way it can feel like a visit to a foreign economy. A vibrant, but still developing, economy offers prices that are only a fraction of what's charged across the border in the city's various Americatowns. Hidden around **Canal Street, between Lafayette and Mott streets,** you'll find a mind-numbing variety of knockoff versions of just about anything with a designer label, from Oakley sunglasses to Kate Spade bags. The area along **Allen Street between Division Street and East Broadway** doesn't attract many tourists, but locals take advantage

of the abundance of cheap apartment-ware shops, where good prices on appliances, furniture, knickknacks, and hardware can be found.

Subway: A/C/E/J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

The Bowery

Chinatown inflections can be found on nearby **Bowery.** The street is rapidly transforming from a district of missions to a nightlife destination, but its primary character in daylight still derives from a profusion of restaurant- and kitchen-supply stores. Many are wholesalers, oriented toward the industry. Those that sell to the public often also have great deals on chairs, small tables, and stools. When you cross **Delancey Street** heading south, you'll be in the cheap-lighting district. Having so many dealers in one place gives the buyer leverage when it comes time to barter on the price.

Subway: J/M/Z to Bowery; F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Spring St.

NoLita & the East Village

NoLita and the East Village are stylish boutique playgrounds. As such, bargains can be hard to find. The good news is that low—if not dirt cheap—prices on haute couture can still be tracked down, if you put in the legwork. NoLita's **Elizabeth, Mott, and Mulberry streets** (btw. Houston and Spring) are dotted with an ever-increasing number of fashionable stops, including one of the city's best consignment stores (see "Designer Consignment Stores" later in this chapter). In the Village, **East 9th Street,** between Second Avenue and Avenue A, is home to a slew of up-and-coming local fashion designers—great for window shopping, if nothing else—and loads of small gift shops.

Subway: N/R/W to Prince St.; 6 to Spring St.; F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Bowery.

The Lower East Side

Holdover street signs designate the chunk of Manhattan south of Houston and east of the Bowery as the "Bargain District." You can still find fabric, bedding, and some clothing, but expensive boutiques and trendy restaurants are crowding the bargains out. The state of flux makes it fun to visit, especially on Sundays. **Orchard Street** closes to traffic **between Delancey and Houston streets,** and vendors lay out cheap goods on tabletops, in the spirit of the pushcarts that were once ubiquitous here. In the warmer months you may also get a free band, fashion show, or pickle festival. On the weekdays, you're more likely to hear the hard sell of a barker. Many of the shopkeepers will bargain,

if that's in your skill set. Little hipster shops have infiltrated Orchard and can also be found scattered around **Ludlow and Stanton** and other nearby streets. Much cheaper goods are available off **Delancey and Clinton streets,** which have a few holdout 99¢ stores and bargain-bin housewares.

Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

On Broadway

The stretches of **Broadway between Bleecker and Canal streets** are a fashion runway for New York youth. With cheap stores abounding, the streets stay packed until nightfall. Though it's sometimes semi-derisively referred to as the "Cheap Sneaker District," lower Broadway has a great selection of hip and affordable jeans, sweats, jackets, and, yes, sneakers. The area's traffic flow has only increased with the opening of a Bloomingdale's satellite in the dearly departed Canal Jeans' space. Thus far, fortunately, the high-profile addition hasn't priced out its cut-rate neighbors.

Subway: B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette; 6 to Spring St.; N/R/W to Prince St.

Chelsea

Proximity to Fifth Avenue's deep purses helped propel Chelsea's stretches of **Sixth Avenue and Broadway** to the top of Manhattan's shopping heap in the late 19th century. The deep purses moved uptown and the department stores followed, but not before leaving behind some lovely cast-iron architecture. Big discount chains have moved in, including a popular Old Navy. There's great thrift shopping along **17th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues,** and the neighborhood is also home to the photo district, the best place for photographic supplies (soon to be entirely replaced by digital-printing supplies, no doubt).

Subway: L to Sixth Ave.; F/V to 23rd St.

Gramercy

The residential enclave of Gramercy, sandwiched between hectic Midtown and East Village streets, is often overlooked as a shopping destination. That's great news for thrift aficionados, who can take advantage of less competition. Gramercy's almost total lack of hipster cred makes the cool clothing, furniture, and collectibles somewhat easier to come by than in picked-over East Village and NoLita stores. The shops along **23rd street between Second and Third avenues** are

well stocked, and the goods are priced low enough that they're continually flowing. For my money, this is the best place in the city to bargain hunt for thrift threads.

Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

MIDTOWN

The Garment District

The huge old buildings in **the 30s between Madison and Eighth avenues** still bear faded advertisements for the furriers and milliners whose shops and factories filled the lofts here. Although much of the manufacturing has moved to cheaper zip codes, the garment trade is still active in ground-floor showrooms. Most are wholesale only, particularly the stretch on **Broadway that runs into the 20s.** A few places are open to the retail public, but the majority of plastic gewgaws they sell aren't very desirable, on the express track for a landfill eternity. Toward the west, Penn Station is a hub for light rail and subway trains, and the streets nearby are a natural mecca for shoppers. Several big discounters are stationed here, as is the largest store in the world, Macy's. For garment shopping, however, downtown is a better bet.

Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.; 1/2/3 or A/C/E to 34th St./Penn Station.

UPTOWN

Clustered on the Upper West and Upper East sides are some of the highest per capita incomes in the world. The big chains and department stores that cater to those lofty budgets dominate the local retail trade, though a few exceptions exist for discerning shoppers. For high-end fashions at low-end prices, the consignment shops on **Madison and Amsterdam avenues** are some of the best in the city.

Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.; B/C to 72nd St.; 4/5/6 to 86th St.

2 Dirt Cheap Threads & More

DIRT CHIC

Used clothing falls into two categories in New York, "thrift" and "vintage." In a thrift shop you'll have to sort through racks of junk to find that one perfect shirt, but it won't set you back more than a few bucks. A good vintage proprietor will do the editing for you, but you'll pay for access to her good taste. For the trendiest items—like a '70s rock

concert T-shirt—a couple of holes in the sleeve may not lower the $60 price tag. Uptown consignment shops will sell you a Chanel suit at a fraction of the original cost, but that's still going to be a several-hundred-dollar commitment. My favorites are shops that split the difference between thrift and vintage, selling used stuff that's still got some life left in it, but not at budget-busting prices. Many of the city's thrift shops are charitable nonprofits, so not only will you be getting a bargain, but you'll also be helping out a worthy cause.

Note: Clothing isn't the only reason we tightwads love thrift stores. Most of the shops listed below also stock an impressive variety of used furniture, jewelry, electronics, books, records, and even art.

On 17th Street

Angel Street Thrift Shop Angel Street does an impressive job of keeping its recycled goods au courant. The clothes are in good shape and most don't scream "just bought at a thrift shop." Some unused ringers like sealed sheets and electronics sneak into the bric-a-brac and bedding sections.

118 W. 17th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/229-0546.** www.angelthriftshop.org. Subway: 1 to 18th St.; F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.

Easy Streets: 17th & 23rd Streets

Chelsea is home to a great series of thrift stores on 17th Street between Fifth and Seventh avenues. Each stop has its own dynamic shopping scene, and items are priced to sell. Stocks turn over frequently, rewarding close-proximity return visits.

My favorite block to thrift shop is 23rd Street between Second and Third avenues. The location in prosperous Gramercy ensures high quality levels for discarded goods.

Housing Works Thrift Shop Housing Works has the city's best thrift shops, with a constant stream of quality donations coming and going. Designer names pop up often on the clothes racks, and the jewelry racks are filled with intriguing items. The real draw, however, is the furniture. Although the premium pieces end up in those gorgeously arrayed store windows (they're up for grabs in silent auctions), many a well-preserved table or chair finds its way to the sales floor.

143 W. 17th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/366-0820.** www.housingworks.org. Subway: 1 to 18th St.; F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave. Other locations:

Upper East Side, 202 E. 77th St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/772-8461.** Subway: 6 to 77th St. *Upper West Side*, 306 Columbus Ave., btw. 74th and 75th sts. ✆ **212/579-7566.** Subway: B/C to 72nd St. *Gramercy*, 157 E. 23rd St., btw. Third and Lexington aves. ✆ **212/529-5955.** Subway: 6 to 23rd St. *Upper East Side*, 1730 Second Ave., at 90th St. ✆ **212/722-8306.** Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St. *West Village*, 245 W. 10th St., btw. Hudson and Bleecker sts. ✆ **212/352-1618.** Subway: 1 to Christopher St. *Brooklyn Heights*, 122 Montague St., at Henry St., Brooklyn. ✆ **718/237-0521.** Subway: M/R/2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall.

17@17 The UJA (United Jewish Appeal) runs a solid thrift shop, with great prices on groovy art and assorted bric-a-brac. Though the furniture can be dated (the '80s just haven't aged very well), the clothes stay current. Frequent sales knock already-low prices in half.

17 W. 17th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/727-7516.** www.ujafedny.org. Subway: F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.

On (& Just Off) 23rd Street

City Opera Thrift Shop Locals sing the praises of this lovely shop, with its balconies full of deals on art, books, and bric-a-brac. Prices for furniture are excellent. Costumey looks dominate the clothing selection, including some pieces that appear to have just left the stage.

222 E. 23rd St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/684-5344.** www.nycopera.com. Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

Goodwill The style quota in these stores tends to be pretty low, with racks full of the fashion miscues of the last couple of decades. However, there's tons to look at here, and it's in a lot better shape than the next-door Salvation Army. Plus, when you do find your diamond in the rough you won't pay much for it. (If it were easy all the time, the big scores wouldn't be nearly as thrilling, right?)

220 E. 23rd St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/447-7270.** www.goodwillny.org. Subway: 6 to 23rd St. Other Manhattan locations: *Harlem*, 2196 Fifth Ave., at 135th St. ✆ **212/862-0020.** Subway: 2/3 to Lenox Ave. *Upper West Side*, 217 W. 79th St., btw. Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. ✆ **212/874-5050.** Subway: 1 to 79th St. *Washington Heights*, 512 W. 181st St., at Audubon St. ✆ **212/923-7910.** Subway: 1 to 181st St. *Upper East Side*, 1704 Second Ave., btw. 88th and 89th sts. ✆ **212/831-1830.** Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St. *Chelsea*, 103 W. 25th St., near Sixth Ave. ✆ **646/638-1725.** Subway: F to 23rd St.

The Vintage Thrift Shop The selection here is very well chosen, with most items in good enough shape to make this feel more like a boutique than a thrift shop. Vintage glasses, glassware, prints, clothes,

A Sample Plan

New York's top fashion designers can't sell just everything they lay their scissors to. Sample outfits made specially for store buyers end up sitting on a rack, along with canceled orders, overstock, and items whose day in the fashion sun has come and gone. When it's time for these garments to leave the warehouse, they go to sample sales, NYC's cheapest way of nabbing haute couture. These websites can help you track down times and locations of sample sales throughout the city (you have to sign up for all of them, but membership is free):

- **www.clothingline.com** This site provides information on the SSS Sample Sale. Designers change every week but the location stays the same, 261 W. 36th St., 2nd floor, btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/947-8748.** Days of the week and hours vary; usually opens 10am. Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to 34th St./Penn Station.
- **www.dailycandy.com** The e-mail newsletter generated by this site is hugely popular, meaning events advertised here tend to be crowded. The website is well organized, with whimsical graphics and listings of all manner of city events, including food and drink choices. The deals section is a great shopping facilitator.

and more can be found here, although the price tags suggest a certain amount of self-awareness. There isn't room for much furniture, but what's here is priced to sell.

286 Third Ave., btw. 22nd and 23rd sts. ✆ **212/871-0777.** Subway: 6 to 23rd St.

Elsewhere

Beacon's Closet Hipsters delight in the well-stocked palaces of the two Beacon's Closets. As a clothing exchange, this store actively buys clothes off its customers, with no appointment necessary. Clean out your closet and turn it into cash. Or you can pick up 20% more by getting paid off in store credit and putting all those newly empty hangers to immediate use. The stores can be a little picky about what they'll take, but that just makes for better selection for shoppers. Both locations have extensive collections of stylish clothes and shoes.

- **www.nysale.com** Store openings and bridal events augment the sale and sample sale information provided when you register here.

Note: Designers have to tiptoe around their retail buyers, who are getting bypassed in the sample system. Rather than flaunt customer-filching, they make their sales low-key. Few are advertised widely, and many of them subsist on word of mouth alone. Keep your eyes open in retail neighborhoods, especially the Garment District; many sample sales take place in vacant storefronts, rented out for only a single weekend's sale.

Tips: Wear elbow pads if you're going at peak hours, especially during weekday lunches. A lot of sales don't take credit cards. Even if they do, cash is still a good idea because sometimes they'll let the sales tax slide. Dressing rooms are few and far between at sample sales, so be prepared to try things on over your clothes. Also, don't expect a lot of latitude for sizes; it's all catch as catch can. Finally, items go "as is," so check carefully for stains and rips before you cash out.

Park Slope, 220 Fifth Ave., btw. President and Union sts. ✆ **718/230-1630.** www.beaconscloset.com. Subway: M/R to Union St./Fourth Ave. Other location: *Williamsburg,* 88 N. 11th St., btw. Berry and Wythe sts. ✆ **718/486-0816.** Subway: L to Bedford Ave.

No Relation Vintage This shop's location in the East Village, just steps from the L train back to Williamsburg and Bushwick, speaks volumes about the selection. Entire hipster wardrobes can be assembled in minutes, for not too, too much scratch (T-shirts hover in the $5–$10 range).

204 First Ave., btw. 12th and 13th sts. ✆ **212/228-5201.** www.norelationvintage.com. Subway: L to First Ave.

Rags-A-GoGo It's a rare thrift/vintage shop that hits the trifecta of good selection, good condition, and good prices. This Chelsea charmer

succeeds, however, with rack after rack of cool pants, T's, sweatshirts, and button-downs. Dusty stuffed animals survey the scene, increasing the atmosphere of quirkiness essential to a good thrifting trip.

218 W. 14th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **646/486-4011.** Subway: 1/2/3 or A/C/E to 14th St.; L to Eighth Ave.

Shop the Ops Ample warehouse space was the fertilizer for Bushwick's recent rise. OfficeOps puts their 6,000-square-foot ground floor to good use with rack after rack of cheap hipster boots, belts, shoes, jackets, plaid pants, and T's.

57 Thames St., enter at Knickerbocker Ave. ✆ **718/418-2509.** www.officeops.org. Subway: L to Morgan Ave.

The Urban Jungle Vintage/Thrift Warehouse A love of vintage that approaches the level of fetish imbues this massive Bushwick space. You can find accessories and art on top of the usual sneaker, T, housedress, and leather jacket suspects.

118 Knickerbocker Ave., btw. Thames St. and Flushing Ave. http://urbanjungle vintage.wordpress.com. Subway: L to Morgan Ave.

Designer Consignment stores

It's not that hard to look like a million bucks in NYC, even if your clothes budget tops out at a substantially smaller number. New York's best consignment shops carry loads of pre-owned, vintage, and overstock garments in near-showroom condition. The clothes are by no means dirt cheap, but for the high end of design, the prices are as low as they come.

Allan & Suzi From the window this looks like a shop targeting transvestites, but there's consignment for all tastes inside. Heavy hitters like Halston and Versace mix with one-off numbers and the rest of the best of 20th-century design.

416 Amsterdam Ave., at 80th St. ✆ **212/724-7445.** www.allanandsuzi.net. Subway: 1 to 79th St.; B/C to 81st St.

Encore For resale women's wear, the Upper East Side is the place to be. Encore is the best of the best, chock-full of big, big names on two floors. A lot of it cost a fortune the first time around and it's still not cheap, but periodic sales can bring luxury into reach. Some of Jackie O's wardrobe made its curtain call here.

1132 Madison Ave., btw. 84th and 85th sts., 2nd floor. ✆ **212/879-2850.** www.encoreresale.com. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.

Ina When *Sex and the City*'s wardrobe department sold off its leftovers, of course it turned to Ina. This designer consignment shop carries the height of style, including the likes of Halston, Prada, and Daryl K. The racks are filled with both vintage and current items, and they're always in excellent shape. Shoes and accessories are here as well, and everything is marked way, way down (though outside of the sales, it's still not cheap). A men's store on Mott Street caters to the burgeoning metrosexual class.

NoLita, 21 Prince St., btw. Mott and Elizabeth sts. ✆ **212/334-9048.** www.inanyc.com. Subway: 6 to Spring St.; N/R/W to Prince St. *NoHo*, 15 Bleecker St., btw. Lafayette St. and Bowery. ✆ **212/228-8511.** Subway: 6 to Bleecker St.; B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette. *SoHo*, 101 Thompson St., btw. Prince and Spring sts. ✆ **212/941-4757.** Subway: C/E to Spring St. *Men's store*, 262 Mott, btw. Prince and Houston. ✆ **212/334-2210.** Subway: N/R/W to Prince St.; 6 to Spring St. *Uptown*, 208 E. 73rd St., btw. Second and Third aves. ✆ **212/249-0014.** Subway: 6 to 77th St.

Michael's Designer wear for women is the focus of this much-loved two-story consignment boutique. The names are familiar—Chanel, YSL, Prada, and Gucci—but the prices are barely recognizable. As pickers, they're very careful, making sure no rips or stains make it onto the floor. The bridal salon is a great find, also specializing in top-shelf quality at rock-bottom prices.

1041 Madison Ave., 2nd floor, btw. 79th and 80th sts. ✆ **212/737-7273.** www.michaelsconsignment.com. Subway: 6 to 77th St.

Tokyo Joe When hipsters need the good stuff, they turn straight to this designer consignment shop. Cramped quarters can make for tough browsing, but the clothes themselves are in excellent shape. Don't miss the big section of lightly used and new shoes, going for a fraction of their cost Uptown.

334 E. 11th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ **212/473-0724.** Subway: L to First Ave.

OTHER TRES CHEAP FASHIONS

H&M Swedish discounter Hennes & Mauritz knocks off the latest looks at low, low prices. They specialize in hip looks for adults, and as such they're a big hit with the teens. Durability is not the greatest, though it is about what you'd expect for these prices.

1328 Broadway, at 34th St. ✆ **646/473-1165.** www.hm.com. Subway: 1/2/3/B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq. Other locations: *Midtown*, 640 Fifth Ave., at 51st St. ✆ **212/656-9305.** Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave. *Times Square*, 505 Fifth

Ave., at 42nd St. ✆ **212/661-7012.** Subway: 1/2/3/7/9/N/Q/R/S/W to 42nd St. *Flatiron,* 111 Fifth Ave., at 18th St. ✆ **212/539-1741.** Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq. *SoHo,* 558 Broadway, btw. Prince and Spring sts. ✆ **212/343-0220.** Subway: N/R/W to Prince St.; 6 to Spring St. *SoHo,* 515 Broadway, btw. Spring and Broome sts. ✆ **212/965-8975.** Subway: 6 to Spring St.; N/R/W to Prince St. *Midtown,* 731 Lexington Ave., at 59th St. ✆ **212/935-6781.** Subway: 4/5/6 or N/R/W to 59th St./Lexington Ave. *Herald Square,* 435 Seventh Ave., btw. 33rd and 34th sts. ✆ **212/643-6955.** Subway: 1/2/3/A/B/C/D/E/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq. *Harlem,* 125 W. 125th St. ✆ **212/665-8300.** Subway: 2/3 to 125th St.

Loehmann's When the original Barneys faltered, longtime discount fave Loehmann's was quick to fill much of the square footage. Casual wear comes in at one-third to two-thirds off the department-store prices, and you can reel in even deeper discounts on the likes of Donna Karan and Versace inside the "Back Room." Great prices for women's shoes, too, and there's an underpublicized men's floor.

101 Seventh Ave., btw. 16th and 17th sts. ✆ **212/352-0856.** www.loehmanns.com. Subway: 1 to 18th St. Other location: 2101 Broadway, at 73rd St. ✆ **212/882-9990.** Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.

Rainbow Shops When the new women's and girls' clothes lines come out, Rainbow wastes no time in coming up with affordable copies. Urban styles predominate, with the target audience well under 25. They have shoes and accessories, lots of plus sizes, and you won't have to part with a pot of gold.

110-114 Delancey St., btw. Essex and Ludlow sts. ✆ **212/254-7058.** www.rainbowshops.com. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St. Other locations: 308 W. 125th St., btw. Manhattan Ave. and Frederick Douglass Blvd. ✆ **212/864-5707.** Subway: A/B/C/D to 125th St. 380 Fifth Ave., btw. 35th and 36th sts. ✆ **212/947-0837.** Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq. Many locations in Brooklyn, too.

Steve & Barry's S&B makes H&M look like D&G. Prices defy all logical explanations, with tags topping off around $10. Venus Williams and Sarah Jessica Parker have contributed designs, and Stephon Marbury's $10 kicks have sold some 10 million pairs. To supplement the ever-mobbed Manhattan Mall store, the former Tower Records near NYU now hosts a second New York location.

100 W. 33rd St., at Sixth Ave. ✆ **877/762-9444.** www.steveandbarrys.com. Subway: 1/2/3/B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq. Other location: 692 Broadway, at E. 4th St. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place.

Weiss & Mahoney Camouflage patterns are still fashion attention-getters locally, since green-shaded organics are about the worst ways to camouflage oneself in NYC (if it's stealth you seek, a series of large gray and black squares would better do the trick). Weiss & Mahoney has been outfitting the city for decades in camouflage, not to mention peacoats and berets. Work clothes are just at normal prices, but surplus and camping goods are way below retail.

142 Fifth Ave., at 19th St. ✆ **212/675-1915.** www.weissmahoney.com. Subway: N/R/W or 6 to 23rd St.

SHOE INS & OUTS

All the miles New Yorkers log as pedestrians help explain the occasional obsessive bent applied to our shoe shopping. My favorite shoe-shopping cluster can be found downtown. **Lower Broadway from East 4th Street down to Canal** has some great options. **West 8th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues** is another nearby minidistrict, with the stylish and all-too-stylish intermixed. NYU undergrads haunt both areas, and prices often accommodate student budgets.

On Broadway

DSW This chain came all the way from Ohio to liberate New Yorkers from high shoe prices. Their warehouse-style mega-stores are packed with recent releases. Special sale areas have the best buys, with markdowns exceeding 75%. Ladies in particular will have to exhibit patience, as the selection goes on forever. (The Battery Park location seems large enough to house a floor of a neighborhood multiplex, which is exactly what it did in its previous incarnation.)

40 E. 14th St., 3rd Floor, btw. University Place and Broadway. ✆ **212/674-2146.** www.dswshoe.com. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq. Other location: *Battery Park*, 102 North End Ave., near Vesey St. ✆ **212/945-7419.** Subway: E to World Trade Center; 2/3 to Park Place; A/C/J/M/Z/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Shoe Mania This popular discount store has a wide-ranging selection, putting Kenneth Coles sole to sole with Doc Martens, Birkenstocks, and Mephistos. Whether you go for style or comfort, you'll find a good price on it here.

853 Broadway, at 14th St. ✆ **212/245-5260.** Subway: 4/5/6/L/N/R/Q/W to 14th St./Union Sq. www.shoemania.com. Other locations: *Midtown*, 331 Madison Ave., btw. 42nd and 43rd sts. ✆ **212/557-6627.** Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to 42nd St./Grand

Central. *Union Square*, 30 E. 14th St., btw. University Place and Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/627-0420.** Subway: 4/5/6/L/N/R/Q/W to 14th St./Union Sq. *Herald Square*, 11 W. 34th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/564-7319.** Subway: F/N/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.

Tip Top Shoes This Uptown shop is tops for walking shoes, which are essential equipment in New York. Rockport, Mephisto, and Ecco are among the brands represented here, sold at reasonable prices. They also carry shoes of a less practical nature for those who prefer form to function. Staff is knowledgeable, if a little harried by the frenetic pace of business here.

155 W. 72nd St., btw. Broadway and Columbus Ave. ✆ **800/WALKING** [925-5464] or 212/787-4960. www.tiptopshoes.com. Subway: 1/2/3 to 72nd St.

On 8th Street

Da'Vinci On-the-spot discounts are part of the code here. With a little bargaining savvy, you can get great prices on styles fresh off the boat from Italy.

37 W. 8th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/982-9879.** www.davincishoesvillage.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Kinway Shoes A family-run friendliness permeates this ramshackle shop. Selection is surprisingly broad given the close quarters.

5 W. 8th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/777-3848.** www.villageshoes.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

3 Flea New York

New Yorkers seeking free stimuli can certainly do worse than whiling away a few hours at a flea market. The rows of tables function as touchable museums, and the sheer width and breadth of available stuff is stunning. Prices for goods are generally not as cheap as they should be given the low-overhead locales, but there are ways to tip the scales in your favor. Sunday, as closing time approaches, the last thing a dealer wants to do is reload that half-ton armoire back into the truck. Likewise, a sudden rain can make parting with a wooden antique or a suede jacket more sweetness than sorrow. Use the elements to your advantage when it's time to haggle.

Brooklyn Flea This festive Fort Greene newcomer runs rain or shine every Sunday from 10am to 5pm (Apr–Dec) at the massive lot outside Bishop Loughlin Memorial High. Some 200 vendors rotate

Come Sale Away

When out-of-towners gawk and marvel that anyone would pay what's printed on a New York price tag, they aren't taking into account that most locals won't throw money away on the full retail price. The key to dirt cheap shopping in the Big Apple is timing the sales. Stores trumpet their markdowns in window displays, newspapers, and flyers, and sales fever is contagious. If one shoe store is doing two-for-one, the rest of the block often isn't far behind. Seasons' ends, like just before back-to-school and just after Christmas, are routinely great for bargain hunters. Buy your sundresses and air conditioners in August, and wait until February to pick up that new winter coat. If your tastes run to vintage or barely used, try looking around in January, when a fresh crop of nonreturnable items get consigned. Best web sources for current sales: www.nymag.com/sales, www.nysale.com, www.gilt.com, www.thechoosybeggar.com, and www.topbutton.com.

through, and you'll find a full selection of vintage jewelry, clothing, vinyl, architectural salvage, and crafts. There are also treats on the side if you want to make a day of it.

357 Clermont Ave., market on Lafayette Ave. btw. Clermont and Vanderbilt Aves. www.brownstoner.com. Subway: C or G to Clinton/Washington aves.

The Garage Imagine a series of yard sales jammed up right on top of each other and you'll have an idea of the scene at the Garage. They've got lots of art, loose photos, and other oddball junk, and the prices are in the same stratosphere as you'd find on a suburban lawn. Two floors, open Saturdays and Sundays from 6:30am to 5pm.

112 W. 25th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ 212/243-5343. www.hellskitchenfleamarket.com. Subway: F/V or 1 to 23rd St.

Greenflea These two fairs are set in schoolyards, and their hosts benefit from the proceeds. The bustling indoor/outdoor Upper West Side fair is a favorite way to spend a Sunday afternoon. The antiques tend to be priced fairly, marginalized as they are by dealers offering less-inspired contemporary imports, crafts, and clothes. The latter also line the nearby strip of Columbus Avenue. Open 10am to 5:30pm,

until 6pm April to October. In the Village, P.S. 41 hosts a Saturday fair from 11am to 7pm, starting in late March and running through early November. Offerings are similar to the uptown version.

W. 76th St., at Columbus Ave. ✆ 212/239-3025. www.greenfleamarkets.com. Subway: B/C to 72nd St.; 1 to 79th St. *West Village*, Charles St. and Greenwich Ave. Subway: 1/2/3 to 14th St.

Hell's Kitchen Flea Market Though it hasn't quite caught up with its dearly departed predecessor in Chelsea, this is still the flea scene to beat in the city. Over 150 vendors bring vibrancy to a dingy strip behind Port Authority. Open weekends, sunrise to sunset.

39th St., btw. Ninth and Tenth aves. ✆ 212/243-5343. www.hellskitchenfleamarket.com. Subway: A/C/E to 42nd St./Port Authority.

West 25th Street Market This churchyard fair is conveniently close to the Garage. Some 125 vendors pack the space with good retro/antique picks, including clothes and art. Open weekends, sunrise to sunset.

29-37 W. 25th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/243-5343. www.hellskitchenfleamarket.com. Subway: F/V or N/R/W to 23rd St.

4 Shekels & Chains: Department Stores

New York traditionally makes it hard for big franchises and chains to survive. The city is competitive to an extreme and there just isn't enough profit margin to pay a bunch of middle management salaries. Though there are a few chains sprinkled through these pages, for the most part I avoid the national retailers. They don't give enough bang for your buck.

Century 21 Nearly destroyed on 9/11, Century 21 has risen from the ashes to reclaim its place as the top clothes-shopping destination in the city. Fancy labels are fully represented here, sans the fancy prices. Expect designer goods at less than half the prices they carry in other department stores. Great deals on sunglasses, linens, and housewares, too. Euro-fueled shopping euphoria has made this place mobbed even beyond peak lunch and weekend times, but recently extended hours (9pm or later Thurs–Sat) have helped some. Don't be too intimidated by long lines for the women's dressing room; the queue moves quickly.

22 Cortlandt St., btw. Broadway and Church St. ✆ **212/227-9092.** www.c21stores.com. Subway: E to World Trade Center; A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau; R/W or 1 to Rector St. Other location: 472 86th St., btw. Fourth and Fifth aves., Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/748-3266.** Subway: R to 86th St.

Daffy's Daffy's never seems as crowded as it should be, given how cheap the clothes are. The merchandise usually isn't big names, and you have to sort through some cheesy-looking Italian designs, but patient shopping always reveals gems. Excellent for staples for men, and New Yorkers are just starting to discover the great kids' selection. The Herald Square location is comprehensive.

1311 Broadway, at 34th St. ✆ **212/736-4477.** www.daffys.com. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq., 1/2/3 to 34th St./Penn Station. Other locations: 462 Broadway, at Grand St. ✆ **212/334-7444.** Subway: N/Q/R/W to Canal St. 3 E. 18th St., at Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/529-4477.** Subway: 4/5/6/L/N/R/Q/W to 14th St./Union Sq. 335 Madison Ave., at 44th St. ✆ **212/557-4422.** Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to 42nd St./Grand Central. 125 E. 57th St., btw. Park and Lexington aves. ✆ **212/376-4477.** Subway: 4/5/6 or N/R/W to 59th St./Lexington Ave.; 50 Broadway, btw. Exchange Alley and Morris St. ✆ **212/422-4477.** Subway: R/W or 1 to Rector St.; 4/5 to Wall St.; J/M/Z to Broad St. 1775 Broadway, btw. 57th and 58th sts. ✆ **212/294-4477.** Subway: 1/A/B/C/D to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

Jack's 99-Cent Stores If you think a dollar doesn't get you far in the big city, you don't know Jack. With central locations and a loyal/rabid clientele, these stores bustle at all hours with bargain-hunters stocking up on housewares, gifts, appliances, and chocolate bars. They even have groceries, at unbeatable prices. Daily specials, unadvertised to appease suppliers, reward frequent visits.

16 E. 40th St., btw. Madison and Fifth aves. ✆ **212/696-5767.** Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave. Other locations: *Midtown*, 45 W. 45th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/354-6888.** Subway: B/D/F/V to 47th–50th sts.–Rockefeller Center; 7 to Fifth Ave. *Herald Square*, 110 W. 32nd St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/268-9962.** Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.; 1/2/3 to 34th St./Penn Station.

Kmart The words Kmart and inspiring are rarely found in the same sentence, but for me every trip to Astor Place's K is a thrilling reminder of NYC's cultural diversity. Students, yuppies, outer-borough homemakers, and Japanese hipsters all rub shoulders as they prowl the long aisles for cheap clothing, housewares, furniture, and even food. The hardware and paint departments have great deals, and there's an excellent plant section. Direct access to the subway makes it easy to drag your haul home.

FREE Take an Unböring Trip to IKEA

Escape from Manhattan Island, courtesy of **IKEA.** Free transportation whisks apartment dwellers to this Swedish-born affordable style haven, now in two locations: Red Hook (Brooklyn) and Elizabeth (New Jersey). In both locations, children of a thousand scattered tribes stream through tasteful simulations of living rooms and kitchens. Parents fondle vaguely cheap-looking Swedish furniture. The checkout lines wind into infinity. IKEA's labyrinth layout also means you can't just dash in, get want you want, and get right back out. That said, the prices are pretty amazing. Nobody else in the tri-state can compete for decent-looking post-dorm furniture, and I'm still using the complete kitchen knife set I bought for $3 several years back. There's an in-store cafeteria should you need a break from the action, with affordable food (including Swedish meatballs, of course).

The Red Hook location is IKEA's first foray into New York City proper, and it's spectacular. In addition to the goods indoors, there's a sprawling six-acre esplanade with amazing Harbor views. The free trip out (you're welcome to ride even if you don't intend to shop) is over open waters, via the New York Water Taxi (✆ **212/742-1969;** www.nywatertaxi.com), leaving from Pier 11 on the East River end of Wall Street every 40 minutes between 1pm and 9pm. 1 Beard Street, at Otsego Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/246-IKEA**. See www.ikea.com for the full shuttle bus route via Park Slope.

For the Elizabeth, New Jersey mothership, there's a bus from Port Authority. Unfortunately the bus runs only on weekends, and weekends at IKEA are *insane.* Take Academy Bus, Gate #5, lower concourse, Port Authority, Eighth Avenue at 42nd Street. Buses (round-trip only) leave every half-hour between 10am and 2:30pm and return from Jersey every half-hour between noon and 6pm. The trip takes about 30 minutes each way (✆ **800/BUS-IKEA** [287-4532]; www.ikea-usa.com). ***Note:*** The bus can accommodate your new possessions on the ride back, as long as they're not too big to carry.

770 Broadway, btw. 8th and 9th sts. ✆ **212/673-1540.** www.kmart.com. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St. Other location: 250 W. 34th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/760-1188.** Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq; 1/2/3 to 34th St./Penn Station.

Macy's (One-Day Sales) Covering 10 stories and an entire city block, this megalith has just about everything, including at any given time a large chunk of the metropolitan shopping population. The key is to buy during the frequent sales. The famous One-Days are the best, usually held on Wednesdays, with the occasional Saturday thrown in. Check the *New York Times* for Macy's full-page advertisements, which sometimes include clip-out coupons for additional 10% to 15% discounts.

Herald Sq., W. 34th St. and Broadway. ✆ **212/695-4400.** www.macys.com. Subway: B/D/F/N/Q/R/V/W to 34th St./Herald Sq.; 1/2/3 to 34th St./Penn Station.

FREE Macy's Flower Show

Outside of sales (which can be great for bargain-hunters), the big department stores aren't much help for the budget-minded. For free entertainment, though, they hold their own. Window displays make great theater, and floor after floor of regal goods make for great browsing. The first 2 weeks of April bring some serious spectacle when Macy's goes nuts for flowers. The store is transformed by over a million blossoms in 18 gardens. Free 20-minute tours run every half-hour from 11am to 4pm. www.macys.com. Flower hot line ✆ **212/494-4495.**

Pearl River This mini department store couples Chinatown prices with SoHo ambience. The inventory favors Asian classics like paper lanterns, silk pajamas, and sequined slippers. Glazed bowls and other housewares make for inexpensive kitchen outfitting. This is a great spot for cheap-gift hunting, too.

477 Broadway, btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ **212/431-4770.** www.pearlriver.com. Subway: N/Q/R/W to Canal St.; 6 to Spring St.

Syms Don't let the hoary slogan ("An educated consumer is our best customer") scare you off. This long-running discount shop keeps the styles plenty fresh, and selection is excellent, with five floors of fashion goodness to peruse. Cater-waiters and symphony conductors can slash their rental bills with tux purchases: My own penguin suit set me back just $139 here.

400 Park Ave., at 54th St. ✆ **212/317-8200.** www.syms.com. Subway: E/V to 53rd St.; 6 to 51st St. Other location: 42 Trinity Place, btw. Rector and Edgar sts. ✆ **212/797-1199.** Subway: R/W or 1 to Rector St.

5 Dirt Cheap Shopping: A to Z

ANTIQUES

See also "Flea New York," earlier in this chapter.

Green Village Used Furniture & Clothing The epic junk collection here requires some rifling, but the low prices reflect the need for elbow grease. For clothes, find quality on the racks and quantity in the bins—purchase 50 pounds or more and it's just $1.50 per pound. Props, costumes, books, dishes, chairs, and miscellaneous antiques round out the 10,000 square feet of possibilities.

276 Starr St., btw. St. Nicholas and Wyckoff aves. www.gogreenvillage.com. ✆ **718/456-8844.** Subway: L to Jefferson St.

Junk The name here isn't exactly self-deprecating: Wares tend to the low-end and you'll have to do some digging. Your reward, however, is solid kitsch at cheap prices. New stock comes in twice a week and turnover is high, so come back often to fill your comic book, needlepoint, and taxidermy needs.

197 N. 9th St., btw. Bedford and Driggs aves. No phone. www.myspace.com/brooklynjunk. Subway: L to Bedford Ave.

RePOP All manner of stylish vintage furnishings here seek second (and third and fourth) lives in the big city. Chairs, tables, desks, and cabinets can be picked up in pop iterations for prices that are a fraction of those at Manhattan vendors. Pratt proximity brings in artisan crafts, and the first Friday of the month features an artist's reception.

68 Washington Ave., btw. Flushing and Park aves. ✆ **718/260-8032.** www.repopny.com. Subway: G to Clinton/Washington aves.

BIKES

Recycle-A-Bicycle The organization that runs these shops promotes biking in the city by selling rehabbed bikes at reasonable prices. A top-of-the-line bike could set you back $500 or more, but that's a fraction of its cost new, and your purchase is helping out a worthy cause.

75 Ave. C, btw. 5th and 6th sts. ✆ **212/475-1655.** www.recycleabicycle.org. Subway: L to First Ave.; F/V to Second Ave. Other location: *DUMBO, Brooklyn,* 35 Pearl St., at Plymouth St. ✆ **718/858-2972.** Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.

BOOKS

See "Word Up: Readings" on p. 88 for other great sites for literary browsing.

The Strand The Strand is as legendary for its 18 miles of books as it is for its 5 inches of aisle space to maneuver in. The big crowds are a testament to the great prices. Review copies of recent books share space with art books at 85% off list and used fiction hardbacks that go for under $5. Bibliophiles with small apartments beware—it's hard to leave empty-handed.

828 Broadway, at 12th St. ✆ **212/473-1452.** www.strandbooks.com. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Unoppressive Non-Imperialist Bargain Books Positioning itself as the anti-B&N, this friendly family-owned shop won't blow you away with the breadth of its selection of Donald Trump autobiographies. It will, however, impress you with its well-chosen bargains in musician biographies, political philosophy, and Eastern religion. Prices start around $2, and great gift ideas abound.

34 Carmine St., btw. Bleecker and Bedford sts. ✆ **212/229-0079.** www.unoppressivebooks.blogspot.com. Subway: A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Westsider Books This tiny, charming shop has the best used books Uptown. Browsers delight in the broad selection of literary and historical works. The occasional reviewer's copy can also be found, at discounted prices.

2246 Broadway, btw. 80th and 81st sts. ✆ **212/362-0706.** www.westsiderbooks.com. Subway: 1 to 79th St.

EDIBLES

Cooking at home is an obvious way of cutting costs, but a trip to the corner deli for necessities can feel like a shakedown by the time you step away from the cash register. Most NYC grocery stores aren't much better, but a few specialty shops offer accessible comestibles.

Deluxe Food Market, Inc. This market is a mishmash of a bakery, buffet, and grocery store. It's menacingly crowded, but the high-volume

turnover keeps things fresh, and the price is right. The steam table in front has fluffy, jumbo-sized dumplings (four for $1.50), along with hot dishes that can be bought by the pound or two for $3.25, three for $3.75, or four for $4.50 (if you don't speak Chinese, you can always just point). The bakery keeps pastry prices below $1, and a Peking duck sandwich on a fluffy white roll is $2. Past the small eat-in section, you'll find a scrum forming around the regular grocery store goods. Fish, meats, and greens are all at rock-bottom prices. You can also load up on frozen specialties, like big packs of dumplings (the NO RE-SELLING signs posted all over the shop are an indicator that you're getting a good deal).

79 Elizabeth St., btw. Hester and Grand sts. ✆ 212/925-5766. Subway: B/D to Grand St.; J/M/Z to Bowery.

Dowel Quality Products Many shoppers only know this store for its unrivalled beer selection, conveniently located near the BYOB restaurants of Curry Row. There's a lot more to like here, however, including health and beauty items, incense, teas, and fruits and vegetables. The best savings come on Dowel's own packaged goods, with bulk rice, chutneys, lentils, and curries of every hue among the highlights.

91 First Ave., btw. 5th and 6th sts. ✆ 212/979-6045. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

East Village Cheese Store This discount dairy destination is the perfect starting point for your next cocktail party. You can get bread, crackers, pâtés, pickles, and other side items, although the jaw-dropping prices are on the cheeses. In the front refrigerators, goat cheese tubes, double-cream brie wedges, and Boursin packages are all under $2. Behind the counter you'll find a long list of specials on fancy goudas and cheddars for $2.99 a pound. The giveaway prices aren't indicative of quality, either. These aren't second-rate goods, just items picked up when some importer added a mistaken zero to an order. Their mistake is your gain.

40 Third Ave., btw. Ninth and Tenth sts. ✆ 212/477-2601. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N/R/W to 8th St.

Essex Street Market When the city squeezed the pushcarts off the Lower East Side 50 years ago, it built a garagelike city market as a replacement. The market evolved into a low-rent grocery store and shopping mall, frequented by Spanish and Chinese locals, who love the prices. (As this is the L.E.S. 2.0, gourmet cheeses, pasta, and chocolate can now be found as well—though not all of them qualify

as dirt cheap). **Essex Farm** (✆ **212/533-5609**), a huge Korean deli, has taken over the north end of the market. They sell just about everything, but the best deals are on fresh fruit and vegetables. A huge container with a blend of gourmet lettuces is just $2.99, fruit salads are around $2, and when the mangos are ripe they're two for $1. The middle of the market has butchers, fishmongers, and a botanica. In the back you'll find **Batista Grocery** (✆ **212/254-0796**), with great prices on Goya and other dry goods. Cafe tables are available if you want to make a picnic (on nice days you can take your meal down to the East River). Since this is downtown, there's even an art gallery tucked away in the very back (**Cuchifritos;** ✆ **212/598-4124;** www.artistsai.org/cuchifritos; Mon–Sat 10am–5pm). Don't forget **Shopsin's** (✆ **212/924-5160**) restaurant next door, run by the inimitable Ken Shopsin, who curses like a sailor as he cooks up "blisters on my sisters" (a rice/beans/eggs/tortillas combo for $8) and other hearty fare from a menu of 300+ items. He's a real New York character, as evidenced from the 2004 documentary about him, *I Like Killing Flies*.

120 Essex St., btw. Rivington and Delancey sts. ✆ 212/312-3603. www.essexstreetmarket.com. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

May Wah Healthy Vegetarian Food, Inc. Sometimes a vegetarian needs a break from the bean sprout and tofu regimen. The Chinese are fake meat experts, and this little Chinatown shop has a massive selection. A big package of frozen unchicken nuggets is only $3.65, and my personal favorite, citrus spare ribs, are an even better deal at $3.10.

213 Hester St., btw. Centre St. and Centre Market Place. ✆ 212/334-4428. www.vegieworld.com. Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Sahadi's This brightly lit and perennially mobbed Brooklyn grocery store is a great source for Middle Eastern cooking staples. Dozens of varieties of olive oil are available, as are nuts, dried fruits, olives, lentils, chickpeas, and of course top quality *maleb* (the Lebanese seasoning made from the insides of cherry pits).

187–189 Atlantic Ave., btw. Court and Clinton sts., Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/624-4550. www.sahadis.com. Subway: M/R to Court St.; 2/3/4/5 to Borough Hall.

Trader Joe's Few new arrivals in the city have been awaited as breathlessly, by Californians and non-Californians alike, as Trader's. This legendary grocery store sells its own brands, eliminating the middle man and his attendant price premiums. Beyond the great prices

are great products, with fresh, often organic ingredients. Somehow the Hawaiian-shirt-wearing staff stays California-friendly, despite the hordes of hardcore New York shoppers. The wine shop next door carries legendary and quite drinkable "Two-Buck Chuck" (though in New York Charles Shaw's finest runs us 3 bucks).

142 E. 14th St., btw. Third Ave. and Irving Place (wine shop is next door at #138). ✆ **212/529-4612.** www.traderjoes.com. Subway: L to Third Ave.; N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

ELECTRONICS

J&R Music World/Computer World I'm constantly surprised how often an online search for discounted electronics brings up J&R as the cheapest supplier out there. Save the shipping cost by coming in to the bustling block-long series of stores. The staff is well-informed and not too brusque (at least by New York standards). The prices on cameras, stereos, computers, and software are excellent, and there's good CD and DVD shopping as well. Check the paper or the website for dates on the frequent sales.

Along Park Row, at Ann St., opposite City Hall Park. ✆ **800/426-6027** or 212/238-9000. www.jandr.com. Subway: 2/3 to Park Place; 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge/City Hall.

FABRICS

Gray Line Linen Savvy seamsters know their way around linen, which has more than double the strength of cotton. Gray Line makes a specialty of the fiber, with rack after colorful rack at crazy-low prices. Linens that high-end stores sell for $30 a yard or more hover in the $7 range here.

260 W. 39th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ **212/768-7618.** www.grayline linen.com. Subway: 1/2/3/7/N/Q/R/S/W to Times Sq./42nd St.; A/C/E to 42nd St./Port Authority.

Harry Zarin Company The fabric selection in this old-timer upstairs warehouse goes the whole nine yards, with an overwhelming selection of textures and styles. Deep discounts get even deeper for overruns and closeouts. Downstairs you'll find a recently remodeled conventional furniture store.

318 Grand St., btw. Ludlow and Orchard sts. ✆ **212/925-6112.** www.zarinfabrics.com. Subway: B/D to Grand St.; F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

P & S Fabrics Corp. Beyond the extensive collection of fabrics, you'll find patterns, trimmings, yarn, and notions at this cluttered downtown shop. Retail accessibility at wholesale prices makes this a great place for fashion DIYers to stock up.

355 Broadway, btw. Franklin and Leonard sts. ✆ **212/226-1534.** Subway: J/M/N/R/Q/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

GIFTS & OTHER CURIOSITIES

Daily 235 For gift shopping, this tiny, creative shop has tiny, creative gifts for under $10. In one convenient stop, fill all your Japanese lamp, John Paul II paper doll, wind-up lederhosen, Bond-Aid brand bondage tape, and evil unicorn figurine needs.

235 Elizabeth St., btw. Prince and Houston sts. ✆ **212/334-9728.** www.daily235.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Bowery.

Pageant Print Shop Some 10,000 antique prints and maps are packed into this tiny storefront. You can find great New York City ephemera, as well as images of everything else humans have been interested in during the last century. The owners, who've been in the business their whole lives, pride themselves on having the lowest prices in the city. Don't miss the poster file, with images that run $4 each or three for $10.

69 E. 4th St., btw. Second Ave. and Bowery. ✆ **212/674-5296.** www.pageantbooks.com. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; 6 to Bleecker St.

SKSK Steve Keene is somewhere between the Henry Ford and the McDonald's of indie art. With his one-man assembly line, he's made

Toys "R" Them

Among the hideous chains that characterize the new Times Square, **Toys "R" Us** stands out for its free entertainment. The central Ferris wheel, which rises sixty feet in the center of the store, is beloved by the kiddies, who don't begrudge the sometimes long waits. A 5-ton animatronic T-Rex is another crowd pleaser, as is the pink-overload zone of Barbie's envy-inducing duplex dollhouse. Prices here are good and made better by frequent in-store specials. Demonstrations are fun to watch and usually come with discounts on the product at hand. Even if you don't have a buying agenda, this is an easy place to fill time on a rainy day. 1514 Broadway, at 44th St. ✆ **646/366-8858.** www.toysrus.com. Subway: 1/2/3/7/N/Q/R/S/W to Times Sq./42nd St.

over 200,000 paintings. If you're looking to decorate on the cheap, you could do worse than S.K.'s factory outlet in Brooklyn (a part of his studio). There's an array of plywood cut-outs, silk-screens, and paintings. A $20 investment will bring you enough to decorate two or three rooms, with change left over. Open Sundays 2 to 6pm, or by appointment.

93 Guernsey St., btw. Norman and Nassau aves. No phone. www.stevekeene.com, or e-mail info@stevekeene.com. Subway: G to Nassau Ave.

FREE Drop Stitch Drop Offs

Knitters and their ilk can widen their shopping options by trekking up to Westchester on the Yarn Bus. The bus connects New Yorkers with the Flying Fingers Yarn Shop, which carries those tofu and bamboo yarns you have so much trouble tracking down in Manhattan. The ride to charming Irvington, on the Hudson, takes about a half-hour, and it's totally free. The bus runs twice a day on the weekends, leaving from various spots around mid- and Uptown. If those times and places aren't convenient, they'll make a custom arrangement for you. Call or e-mail in advance to reserve your place. Look for the blue van with the lamppost-sized needles piercing three jumbo yarn balls on the roof. 19 Main St., Irvington, New York. ✆ **877/359-4648.** www.flyingfingers.com.

HOUSEWARES

Broadway Panhandler Pan reviews consistently put this place at the top. For restaurant-quality cookware and kitchen tools, you can't find a better combo of selection, price, and service.

65 E. 8th St., at Mercer St. ✆ **212/966-3434.** www.broadwaypanhandler.com. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.

Fishs Eddy You can reel in remainders of custom china here. Prices are relatively low, certainly the best you'll do on a plate marked "Blue Plate Special." You can also find retro designs, including soda fountain glasses and vintage-looking flatware.

889 Broadway, at 19th St. ✆ **212/420-9020.** www.fishseddy.com. Subway: 4/5/6/L/N/R/Q/W to 14th St./Union Sq.

Lighting by Gregory Great selection and good prices on lighting, plus a big collection of ceiling fans. The latest lighting trends can always be found.

158 Bowery, btw. Delancey and Broome sts. ✆ **888/811-FANS** [3267] or 212/226-1276. www.lightingbygregory.com. Subway: J/M/Z to Bowery; F/V to Second Ave.

National Wholesale Liquidators Almost anything you would want inside a house—from batteries to cosmetics to spatulas—can be found here at absurdly low prices. I always pick up my Brita water filter refills here. Upstairs are electronics and cheap recordable CDs. Hardware, along with Manhattan-anomalous auto supplies, packs the basement.

632 Broadway, btw. Bleecker and Houston sts. ✆ **212/979-2400.** www.nationalwholesaleliquidators.com. Subway: B/D/F/V to Broadway/Lafayette; 6 to Bleecker St.

Flower Power

Two green thumbs go up for the selection of plant and flower stores on **28th Street between Sixth and Seventh avenues,** and overflowing onto Sixth Avenue. (For those with brown thumbs, a great selection of plastic plants awaits as well.) The stores are a mix of wholesale and retail, with the best prices going to bulk buyers. Small purchasers can also reel in good buys, especially at **Starbright Floral Design** (150 W. 28th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves.; ✆ **800/520-8999;** www.starflor.com; subway: 1 or N/R/W to 28th St.).

Pearl Paint Pearl Paint has the city's best art supply prices and selection, in a sprawling compound tinted by an air of genial disarray. Specialty stores on the rear block (Lispenard) back up five floors of supplies in front (Canal). Frames, papers, canvas, and incidentals like day-planners and portfolios all carry the lowest prices in the city.

308 Canal St., btw. Broadway and Mercer St. ✆ **212/431-7932.** www.pearlpaint.com. Subway: A/C/E or 1 to Canal St.

LUGGAGE, LEATHER & HANDBAGS

Altman Luggage This old-time LES classic has wheeled luggage galore, in addition to businessperson sundries like pens, wallets, and watches. Already deep discounts get even deeper for closeouts and items that have been too long on the showroom floor.

135 Orchard St., btw. Rivington and Delancey sts. ✆ **212/254-7275.** www.altmanluggage.com. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

Knock It Off

By lore, the first major New York swindle was Dutch settlers trading $24 worth of beads and baubles for the island of Manhattan. There's some question as to who was scamming whom in that arrangement (it's likely the natives didn't think the land could be bought or sold), but it set a karmic pattern that's still in place today. Tourists buy a Movado watch or a Chanel purse or Armani sunglasses, giggling as they leave $18 with some sucker of a vendor. It's not until the cheap knockoff disintegrates 3 days later that they realize which side of the con they were actually on. If the price seems too good to be true, it certainly is. Crackdowns on counterfeiting have driven sellers to the shadows, but there's still selection aplenty. **Orchard Street** on the Lower East Side has decent fakes, although better action can be found in **Chinatown.** The designer purses and bags are pretty convincing, and they'll survive a little wear and tear. You can also find decent ersatz wallets, scarves, and perfume. Vendors of the Vuittonesque and Burberryish keep to where the tourists are, often along Canal between Lafayette and Mott. If you don't look like an undercover cop, they'll flash you a picture of their wares and lead you back to a stall. You can also find knockoffs near Bloomie's in Midtown, and Broadway in the west 40s. Periodic police busts (of the sellers) keep proprietors on their toes, so expect the hot locations for the real fakes to be in a state of constant flux.

MUSIC

Between burning, shredding, and downloading, brick and mortar music stores are increasingly imperiled. If you still take your music in tangible form, you can join fellow music junkies at **Academy Records and CDs.** The second-hand CD shelves are packed with classical, jazz, opera, and rock. Prices are excellent, and the selection is forever in motion as Academy aggressively acquires collections. For selections on vinyl, try **Academy LPs** in the East Village.

12 W. 18th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/242-3000.** www.academyrecords.com. Subway: 4/5/6/L/N/R/Q/W to 14th St./Union Sq.; F/V to 14th St.

Academy LPs, 415 E. 12th St., btw. First Ave. and Ave. A. ✆ **212/780-9166.** Subway: L to First Ave.

PHOTO

Adorama Photo pros flock to Adorama, which has unbelievably low prices on digital accessories, photo prints, and sundry items like blank cassettes. There are also film and second-hand lenses and SLR bodies in the back, although most of that is headed the way of the 8-track tape. FINE PRINT Closed Friday afternoons, all day Saturday, and Jewish holidays.

42 W. 18th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/675-6789.** www.adorama.com. Subway: 1 to 18th St.; F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.

B&H A bustling 35,000-square-foot space holds B&H's massive inventory of digital equipment, lighting, DVD players, home theater systems, and a host of photo-related products. Prices are very competitive, especially for used cameras and accessories. If you don't know

Vinyl Haven: The WFMU Record Fair

If you've got an issue with piracy, or album art is a must, old-fashioned vinyl is the way to go. Thrift stores top out at $2 per disk, though DJs assure there are slim pickings outside of classical. For record fanatics, the paramount weekend is in early November, when the **WFMU Record Fair** comes to town. WFMU's free-form radio is one of New York's greatest cultural assets, and the record fair brings an incredible array of dealers. The show costs $6 to enter, but that fee includes free live bands, screenings in an AV room, and table after table of cheap CDs and vinyl. I ignore the $70 collector disks and head straight for the boxes under the table, where the two-for-$1 disks are most likely to be found. The fair is held at the **Metropolitan Pavilion** (125 W. 18th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves.; subway: 1 to 18th St.). For more information, call ✆ **201/521-1416,** ext. 243, or log on to www.wfmu.org/recfair. ***Tip:*** Sunday afternoon is the best bargain-hunter's time. Buyers are burned out and dealers are doing everything they can to keep from hauling all that obsolete technology back home.

exactly what you want, the pros here provide expert advice. FINE PRINT Closed Friday afternoons, all day Saturday, and Jewish holidays.

420 Ninth Ave., btw. 33rd and 34th sts. ✆ **800/606-6969** or 212/444-6615. www.bhphotovideo.com. Subway: A/C/E to 34th St.

SALVAGE

Build It Green! NYC As a side-effect of working to save the planet, this non-profit offers up deeply discounted building materials, which it diverts from landfill languishment. The warehouse holds 75 tons of doors, floors, sinks, and trim. For even cheaper stock, come by during a Stop 'N Swap block party and trade up for another man's treasure.

3-17 26th Ave., at 3rd St., Astoria, Queens. ✆ **718/777-0132.** www.bignyc.org. Subway: N/W to Astoria Blvd.

SWEETS

Economy Candy The Lower East Side of the '30s was littered with small specialty shops like this one, which remains a family business 70 years later. With the other shops now defunct, Economy Candy has taken on their responsibilities, selling everything from coffee to nuts to dried fruit. Oh yeah, they also sell a little candy. From floors to rafters, the store is packed with lollipops, gum drops, halvah, gourmet candy bars, bulk chocolate, and pretty much anything else sweet you can think of. Prices are very reasonable, especially when you buy by the pound.

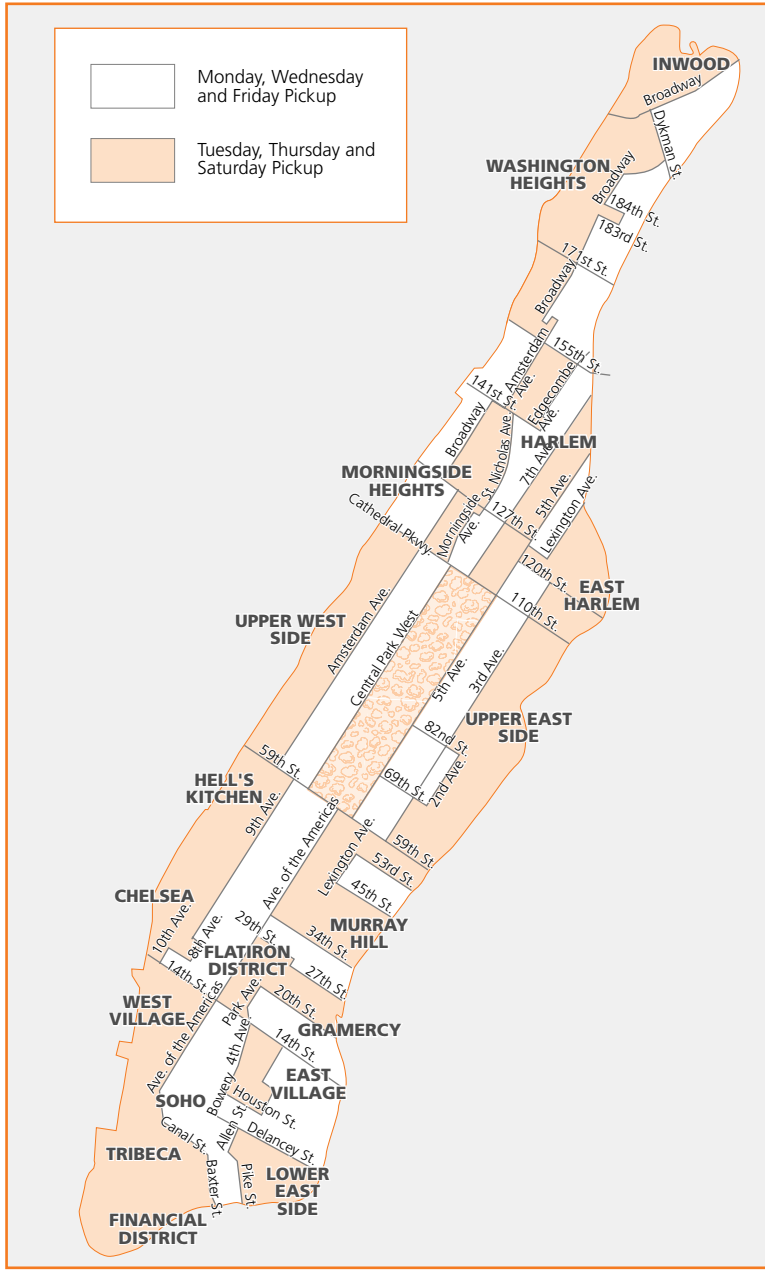
108 Rivington St., btw. Essex and Ludlow sts. ✆ **212/254-1531.** www.economycandy.com. Subway: F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St.

6 Free from New York

My apartment would be an exercise in minimalism if it weren't for the generosity of the sidewalks of New York. Lamps, chairs, prints, and even the lovely beveled mirror in the kitchen have all been harvested from the bounty of the curbs. The key is to strike without hesitation because good stuff doesn't lay around the streets for long.

A good place to start is the Department of Sanitation's website (www.nyc.gov/html/dsny), where you can find out the current collection schedule for any address in any of the boroughs. Unless you're a van owner, you'll probably want to target places that are within close

MANHATTAN SIDEWALK GIVE-AWAY/ TRASH PICKUP DAYS



Getting Free & Dirt Cheap Furniture Online

It's no secret that bargains galore can be found in the ether. Collectibles, clothes, even subway maps end up on the online auction block. If you're in the market for furniture in New York City, you may have an advantage over your midwestern and West Coast rivals. Many of New York's eight million residents live in tiny spaces, and **eBay** (www.ebay.com) is loaded with our local treasures. But dressers, desks, and other pieces with heft can cost several hundred dollars to ship, doubling or tripling the cost of an eBay purchase. When you're doing your bidding keep an eye out for New York zip codes—you may be the only person who can get a Man with a Van to take it home for a reasonable price. **Craigslist** (www.craigslist.org) is another site worth scoping. A whole section of postings is reserved for free items. Ugly furniture, moving boxes, pit bulls, boa constrictors, and computers are easy to come by, as well as less essential items like box turtles, hermit crab shelters, and 12-packs of nonalcoholic beer, purchased in error. Look for "Curb Alerts," which tip off the public to salvagable items about to be dumped unceremoniously on the street. **Curbside Booty** (www.curbsidebooty.com) is a nascent site that has an inside track to major office equipment giveaways. Their classifieds section recently listed servers, monitors, and a 42" projection TV. Check back frequently because the free mosaic is constantly shifting.

hauling distance. (Trash-picking pros invest in small, wheeled hand trucks.)

Generally, just after the first of the month is the best time to be on the prowl. People have just moved in or out, and they're more likely to have been of a disposing bent. Late May, at the end of the school year, is another excellent time. The streets around NYU and Columbia overflow with abandoned student goods. Though much of what you'll see is better suited to a dorm than your swanky digs, with careful culling you can always find gems.

Freecycle NYC FREE This new grassroots organization is trying to do something about the inevitable waste that takes place in our megalopolis. They take two main tacks to hooking up discarders and consumers. The first is online, via a Yahoo Group (www.groups.yahoo.com/group/freecyclenewyorkcity) which generates over 2,000 leads a month. There's no cost to join; the main stipulation is that everything offered must be free—not even trading is allowed. Your second opportunity to clear out or stock up comes with **FreeMeets.** These fests allow reusable goods to change hands. Look for the Post-Holiday Re-Gifting event in January and a major spring cleaning fair in May. Check the website, **www.recyclethisnyc.org**, to get the location and other information.

Swap-O-Matic FREE More art project than large-scale redistribution system, at least for now, this vending machine dispenses free items of marginal utility. To get swapping you first need to donate something to the machine. With that credit, you can select an item to take as your own. A computer and combination locks prevent gaming of the system. Giveaways tend to the shell necklace/used book/bottle opener end of things, but maybe the project will expand as the world's climate forces us to become more conscious of our consumption. Check the website for the machine's latest location, **www.swap-o-matic.com**.

Swap-O-Rama-Rama Sort through 4,000 pounds of clothes, for free! That's the come-on to this community event, where you dump off some of your own fashion don'ts and then replenish your closet with whatever you find. A $10 donation is requested, which entitles you to both duds and DIY workshops. "Shoppers" can get help with on-the-spot iron-ons, silk-screening, and tailoring. Successful projects are oohed and aahed over at the end-of-the-day fashion show. Check the website for dates and location, **www.swaporamarama.org**.

7 Pet Project

Sure, your loyal, vicious Yorkie saves you thousands of dollars a month in bodyguards and private security services, but you don't want to turn around and sink all that cash into an expensive pet-care proposition. Fortunately, New York has a couple of places that provide veterinary

support at pint-sized prices. Don't yet have that mouse-killing tabby in the house? NYC also has pets available at low, low costs.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Subsidized pet care is available at the Bergh Memorial Animal Hospital & Clinic, run by this legendary group. An appointment for an exam with a vet costs $75, and an emergency visit is $110. They also provide shots, $25 for rabies or distemper on top of the regular exam fee. If you need to get a pet before you can start worrying about pet care, the ASPCA also has adoption services. Cats and dogs start at around $75, puppies and kittens at $125, and purebreds go up from there. The cost covers several necessities, including "pet Lojack"—a microchip should your new best friend make a break for freedom. If you want to microchip your current pet the cost is $25 with an exam, and $45 for walk-ins.

424 E. 92nd St., btw. First and York aves. ✆ **212/876-7700.** www.aspca.org. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.

Bideawee The name of this century-old charitable organization derives from the Scottish for "stay awhile," though they'd just as well put cats and dogs through the revolving door as quickly as possible. Adoptions here can be had for a processing fee of around $125, which covers a host of services. When it's time for follow-up, Bideawee's veterinary clinic is subsidized and among the most reasonable in the city.

410 E. 38th St., 2nd floor, btw. First Ave. and the FDR. ✆ **212/532-5884.** www.bideawee.org. Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to 42nd St./Grand Central.

The Brooklyn Animal Resource Coalition Love dogs, but not ready for the full-out commitment of daily walking and feeding? Billburg's BARC will let you test-drive a pooch during morning or evening hours. You'll be helping the shelter out by giving one of their minions some exercise, you'll have a handy conversation-starter, and who knows? Maybe you'll form a bond. Allow a couple of hours if you want to walk or adopt.

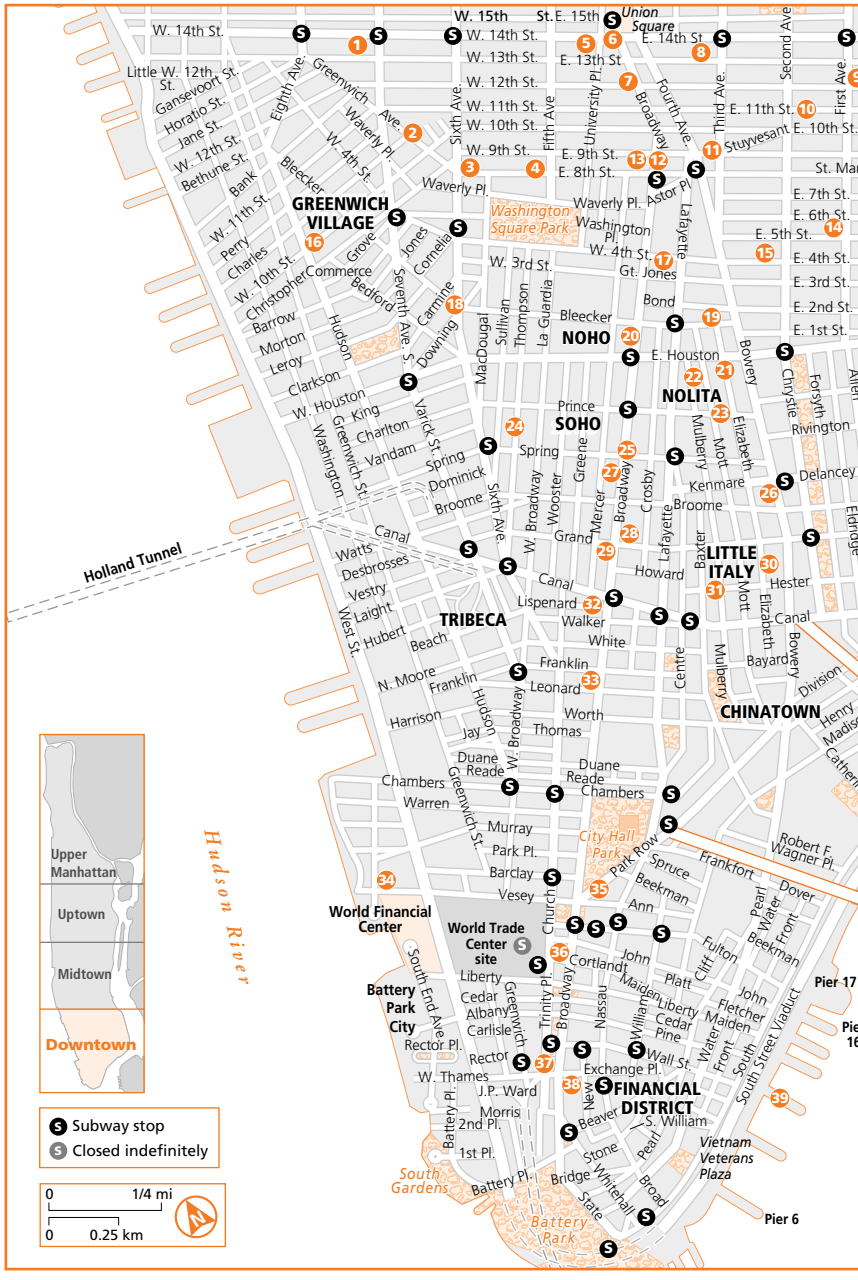
253 Wythe Ave., at N. 1st St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/486-7489.** www.barcshelter.org. Subway: L to Bedford Ave.

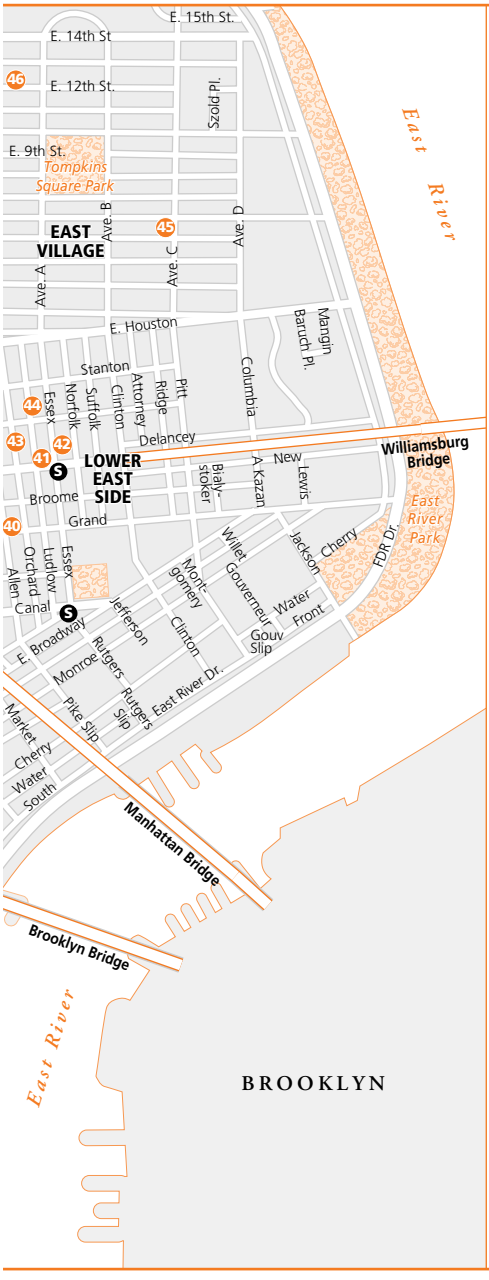
Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals Mayor Mike has ambitious plans to make us a no-kill city. To that end, his alliance connects low-income residents with low-cost spaying and neutering services. If

you're in the pet market, the alliance puts on a series of adoption festivals. In addition to spontaneously falling for an unclaimed cur there, you can hook up your current pets with microchips at a special $25 rate. For citywide pet services, the alliance's website is also a very helpful clearinghouse.

✆ **212/252-3250.** www.animalalliancenyc.org.

SHOPPING DOWNTOWN





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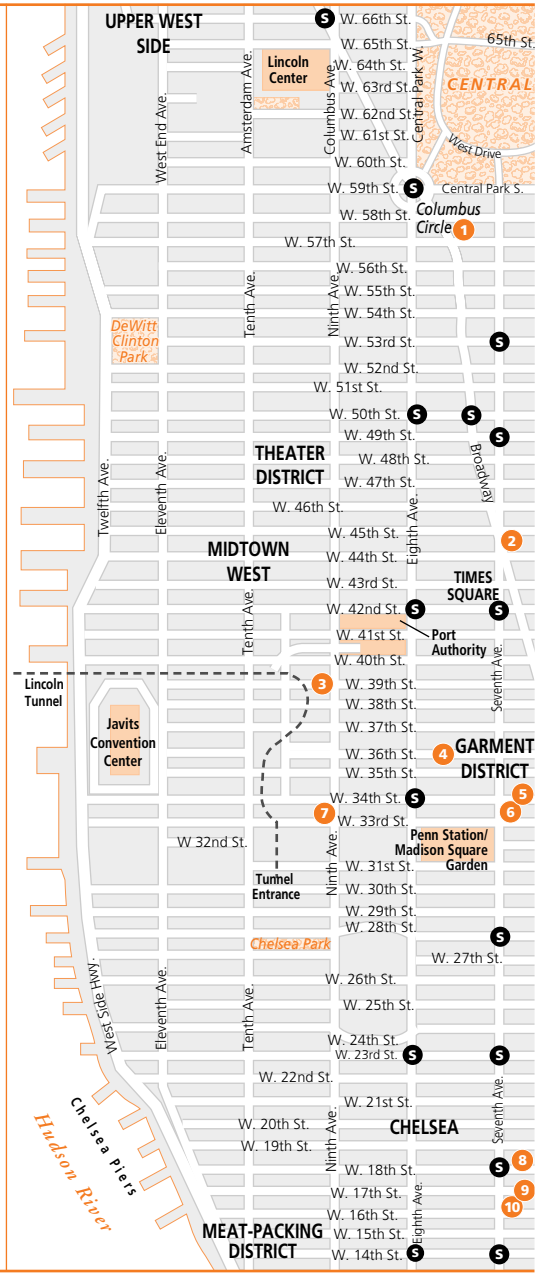

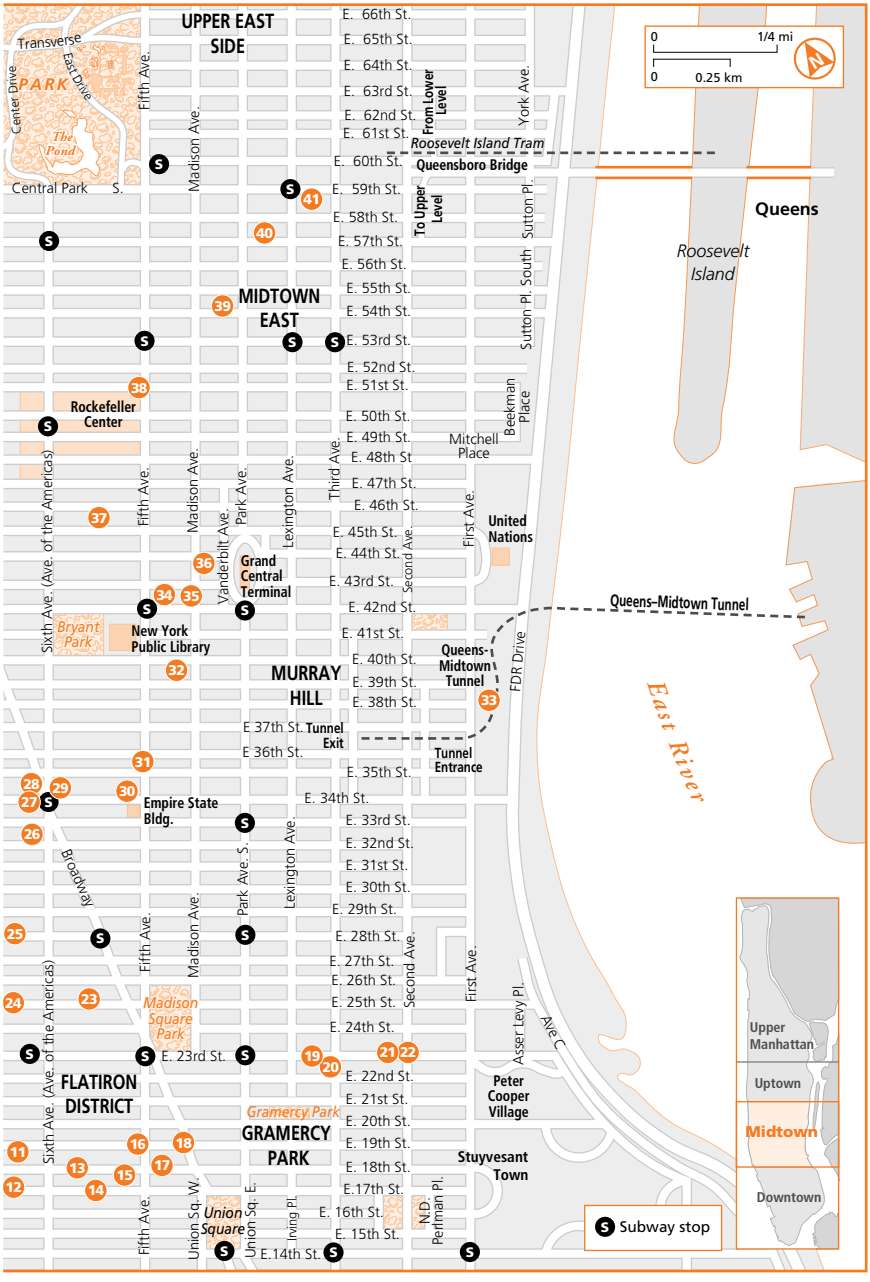
UPPER EAST SIDE
MIDTOWN EAST
MURRAY HILL
FLATIRON DISTRICT
GRAMERCY PARK
Peter Cooper Village
Stuyvesant Town
Queens
Roosevelt Island
Roosevelt Island Tram
Queensboro Bridge
Queens-Midtown Tunnel
Tunnel Exit
Tunnel Entrance
East River
United Nations
Rockefeller Center
Grand Central Terminal
New York Public Library
Bryant Park
Empire State Bldg.
Madison Square Park
Gramercy Park
Union Square
Mitchell Place
Beekman Place
Transverse
Center Drive
East Drive
PARK
The Pond
Central Park S.
Fifth Ave.
Madison Ave.
Sixth Ave. (Ave. of the Americas)
Park Ave.
Park Ave. S.
Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
Second Ave.
First Ave.
Broadway
Yanderbilt Ave.
York Ave.
Sutton Pl.
Sutton Pl. South
FDR Drive
Asser Levy Pl.
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Union Sq. E.
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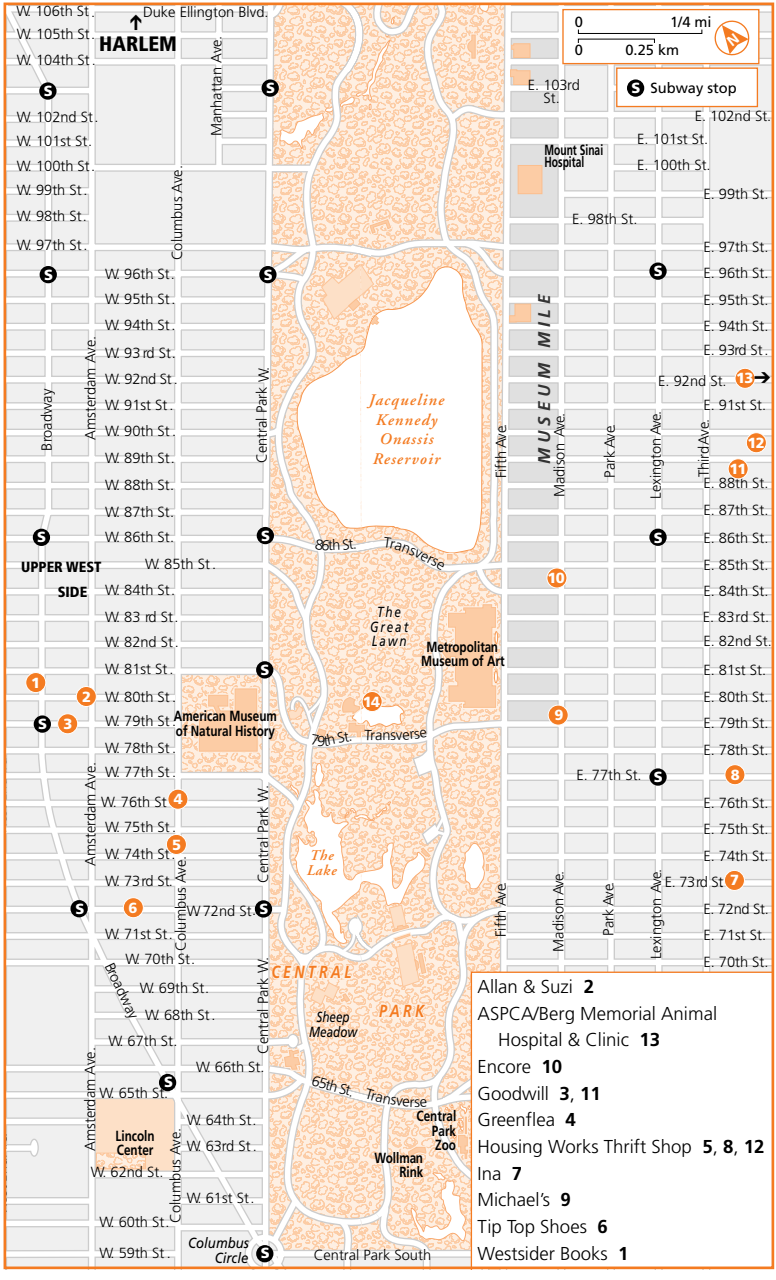
Uptown
Midtown
Downtown
Subway stop

SHOPPING UPTOWN



A haven of elegant Beaux Arts architecture, the Humanities and Social Sciences Library offers a wealth of free exhibits. *See p. 258 for more information.*

6 EXPLORING NEW YORK

When it comes to culture, New Yorkers have so many amazing options it's probably inevitable that we start taking them for granted. We sometimes forget that many of the world's great treasures have found their way to our little island and its surrounding boroughs. New York is in a constant state of transformation, but miraculously a lot of history has survived, too, in houses, churches, and museums. Foundations and galleries protect New York's cutting-edge reputation, putting on thousands of risk-taking avant-garde art shows every year. What's most amazing, given the out-of-control nature of New York rents, is how easy it is to access these jewels on

the cheap. Many museums let the public in for free, and many more either have special pay-what-you-wish times or admission prices that are only suggestions. If it all seems a little overwhelming, you can get a professional to guide you through the cultural minefield. New York has a bushel of free tours as well. Just remember to get out there and take advantage—nothing lasts forever.

1 Museum Peace

Museum prices in New York are working their way skyward, with admission inflation running higher than even our outrageous movie tickets. Fifteen bucks seems to be the going price for big institutions, although the Guggenheim takes $18, and MoMA hits you up for a full $20. It's a good thing that New York's cultural waters run deep. Below you'll find the gamut of (a) places that never charge, (b) places that have select times when the museum is free, and (c) museums that only suggest their admission prices—even the Guggenheim and the MoMA will let you in for next to nothing if you time it right. Go and revel in NYC's embarrassment of cut-rate cultural riches.

ALWAYS FREE

American Folk Art Museum Eva and Morris Feld Gallery FREE

The main Folk Art collection moved to 53rd Street to rub shoulders with the MoMA, leaving not much beyond a gift shop in this original location. New acquisitions and a smattering of selections from the permanent collection fill the galleries. FINE PRINT A sign at the security desk notes that there's a $3 suggested donation, but nobody hits you up as you go in.

2 Lincoln Sq., Columbus Ave., btw. 65th and 66th sts., across from Lincoln Center. ✆ 212/595-9533. www.folkartmuseum.org. $3 suggested donation. Tues–Sat noon–7:30pm; Sun noon–6:30pm. Subway: 1 to 66th St.

Art Students League of New York Gallery FREE

This independent art school, founded in 1875, is a New York legend. A host of big names started out here, including Norman Rockwell and Georgia O'Keeffe, who left behind work in the league's permanent collection. The galleries on the second floor exhibit portions of that collection along with art by current students, members, and other contemporaries.

215 West 57th St., btw. Broadway and Seventh Ave. ✆ **212/247-4510.** www.theartstudentsleague.org. Mon–Fri 9am–8:30pm; Sat–Sun 9am–3pm (closed Sun Jan–May). Subway: N/R/Q/W to 57th St.; B/D/E to Seventh Ave.

Audubon Terrace Broadway, between 155th and 156th streets, boasts a complex of educational and cultural institutions, housed around a central courtyard with an odd, oversized statue of El Cid. The sedate classical structures are completely unexpected in the middle of a colorful Harlem neighborhood, so unexpected that few people make the trek this far north. As a result, Audubon Terrace has been hemorrhaging institutions at a rapid pace. All but the following two have flown south:

American Academy of Arts and Letters FREE This prestigious century-old organization extends membership to the cream of the nation's writers and artists. Exhibits in March and May highlight the works of these artists, as well as the recipients of Academy prizes.

Audubon Terrace, Broadway, btw. 155th and 156th sts. ✆ **212/368-5900.** www.artsandletters.org. Open when exhibitions are up Thurs–Sun 1–4pm. Subway: 1 to 157th St.

The Hispanic Society of America FREE Hispanic treasures ranging from Bronze Age tools to Goya portraits, seemingly assembled at random, fill this musty but intriguing museum. Free tours are offered every Saturday at 2pm. Don't miss the intricate marble chapel sculptures on the first floor and the gorgeous arabesque tiles upstairs.

Audubon Terrace, Broadway, btw. 155th and 156th sts. ✆ **212/926-2234.** www.hispanicsociety.org. Tues–Sat 10am–4:30pm; Sun 1–4pm. Subway: 1 to 157th St.

Austrian Cultural Forum FREE The architecture of the Austrian Cultural Forum has garnered more eyebrow raises than critical praise. I find the exterior ominous, like a dagger looming over the street. The interior is more attractive, sleek, if somewhat cold. The multilevel spaces accommodate several galleries. Austrian- and European-themed shows rotate through, and there are regular film and music programs. FINE PRINT Events are free, but many require advance reservations.

11 E. 52nd St., btw. Fifth and Madison aves. ✆ **212/319-5300.** www.acfny.org. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm. Subway: E/V to 53rd St.

Carnegie Hall FREE The Rose Museum recounts the practice, practice, practice it takes to get to this storied music hall. A chronology and memorabilia are on view, in addition to occasional temporary exhibits

on Carnegie legends like the Gershwins, Tchaikovsky, or Leonard Bernstein.

154 W. 57th St., 2nd floor, btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/903-9629.** www.carnegiehall.org. Daily 11am–4:30pm, and to Stern Auditorium and Perelman Stage ticket holders during evening concerts. Closed July 1–Sept 14. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St.–Columbus Circle; N/Q/R/W to 57th St./Seventh Ave.

Center for Jewish History FREE Several beautiful galleries document the Jewish experience. Photos, prints, and portraits are the primary mediums. See p. 305 for a full review.

15 W. 16th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/294-8301.** www.cjh.org. *Reading Room,* Mon–Thurs 9:30am–5pm; Fri by appt. *Genealogy Institute,* Mon 9:30am–7:30pm; Tues–Thurs, 9:30am–5pm. *All other galleries,* Mon–Thurs 9:30am–5pm; Fri 9am–3pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

The Chancellor Robert R. Livingston Masonic Library of Grand Lodge FREE The museum front room of the Masons' library is adorned with several display cases. Most artifacts are of limited interest to non-Masons, although there is a grandfather clock that watched over George Washington's visits to a Yorktown, Virginia, lodge. More interesting are the tours of the larger building, which show off colorful, immaculate meeting rooms and the ballroom whose design was lifted for the Titanic. No appointment is necessary; a greeter will meet you by the rear elevators.

71 W. 23rd St., rear elevators to the 14th floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/337-6620.** www.nymasoniclibrary.org. Tours Mon–Sat 10:30am–2pm. Library open Mon, Wed–Fri 8:30am–4:30pm; Tues noon–8pm. Subway: F/V or N/R/W to 23rd St.

Federal Hall National Memorial FREE A former customs house, this columned Wall Street museum now recounts the long history of the site. After lengthy renovations, the building has newly reopened to the public. See p. 317 in chapter 7 for a full review.

26 Wall St., at Nassau St. ✆ **212/825-6888.** www.nps.gov/feha. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5 to Wall St.

Federal Reserve Bank FREE In addition to the gallery of the American Numismatic Society (p. 321) on the ground floor here, advance sign-up will give you the chance to glimpse a little of the building. It's basically a tour of a bank. A bank with the largest gold cache in the world, but still a bank. Along the way you'll see two short videos, one weirdly defensive about the employees of the currency-processing division, and one weirdly defensive about the employees

who work with the gold. Five stories beneath the street you'll get to see the vault itself, which resembles a gym locker room, only with over $100 billion in gold shimmering behind the bars. As a reward for your attention, they'll give you $1,000 in cash. Shredded cash. FINE PRINT Call 1 to 2 weeks in advance to reserve a space.

33 Liberty St., btw. William and Nassau sts. ✆ 212/720-6130. www.newyorkfed.org. Tours weekdays 9:30am, 10:30am, 11:30am, 1:30pm, and 2:30pm (they last about an hour). Subway: A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Fisher Landau Center for Art FREE Few New Yorkers know about the 25,000-square-foot exhibition and study center inside this converted Queens industrial space. The pristine galleries display painting, sculpture, and photography from 1960 to the present, including works by the likes of Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly. You'll find three floors of viewing pleasure. You'll also delight in the cultlike glazed eyes of security guards who relay your every move via walkie-talkies.

38-27 30th St., btw. 38th and 39th aves. ✆ 718/937-0727. www.flcart.org. Thurs–Mon noon–5pm. Subway: N/W to 39th Ave.

Forbes Magazine Galleries FREE Wind through well-maintained displays of Malcolm Forbes's idiosyncratic fancies in this whimsical boutique museum. See p. 304 for a full review.

62 Fifth Ave., at 12th St. ✆ 212/206-5548. www.forbesgalleries.com. Tues–Wed, Fri–Sat 10am–4pm. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

General Grant National Memorial FREE Manhattan is home to the nation's largest mausoleum, the graceful 1897 structure that houses the remains of General Ulysses S. Grant. (For punch-line sticklers, Mrs. Julia Grant is interred here as well.) The hushed interior conveys peaceful repose. There's a small on-site museum where you'll be surprised to discover the huge deal Grant's funeral was in New York. The tomb itself was once a popular attraction, but tourists have found more pressing enticements, and the memorial feels secluded, nearly forgotten.

Riverside Dr., at 122nd St. ✆ 212/666-1640. www.nps.gov/gegr. Daily 9am–5pm. Subway: 1 to 125th St.

Hall of Fame for Great Americans FREE You'd think a gigantic monument designed by Sanford White, with tablets by Tiffany Studios, memorializing American heroes like Mark Twain, Abe Lincoln, and Susan B. Anthony would be a major draw, but this oddball attraction is sadly overlooked. The distant location, on the Bronx Community

College campus, might be part of the problem. If you're in the area, don't miss out because the open colonnade with its 102 bronze busts and classical architecture is a wonderful surprise.

Hall of Fame Terrace, 181st St. and University Ave., the Bronx. ✆ 718/289-5161. www.bcc.cuny.edu/halloffame. Daily 10am–5pm. Subway: 4 to 183rd St.

Hamilton Grange National Memorial FREE Federalist Paper author and first secretary of the treasury Alexander Hamilton started construction on his country home in 1800. Once part of a 32-acre estate, Hamilton Grange became crowded by an undistinguished apartment building and an impudent church balcony. The National Park Service recently moved the surviving house around the corner, with a re-opening scheduled for 2009. Look for the scale model of the yellow Federal-style structure as it looked when it was surrounded by the hills and trees of a vanished Harlem.

141st St. and St. Nicholas Ave. ✆ 212/283-5154. www.nps.gov/hagr. Wed–Sun 9am–5pm. Subway: 1 to 137th St.; A/B/C/D to 145th St.

Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion Museum FREE Multiple galleries here display assorted Judaica and contemporary artwork of a Jewish bent. The historical exhibits are particularly interesting, like recent explorations of the Albanian Muslim rescuers of the Holocaust, or the internment of Mayor LaGuardia's Jewish sister at Ravensbrück. Shows change regularly, with 8 to 10 moving through each year. FINE PRINT A photo ID is required to enter.

1 W. 4th St., btw. Broadway and Mercer St. ✆ 212/824-2205. www.huc.edu/museums/ny. Mon–Thurs 9am–6pm; Fri 9am–3pm; selected Sun 10am–2pm. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place.

Irish Hunger Memorial FREE This large-scale sculpture on the downtown Hudson waterfront memorializes the Irish famine of 1845–52. The center of the installation is a famine-era cottage moved stone by stone from the old country, resting on a field of blackthorn and heather. Take the path to the memorial's top and you'll be treated to sublime views of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

Vesey St. and North End Ave. ✆ 212/967-9700. www.bpcparks.org. Daily 6am–1am. Subway: 1/2/3/A/C to Chambers St.

The Italian American Museum FREE The Italian-American presence in New York City goes back to the 1640s, but the bulk of the permanent exhibits here focus on the great migration around the turn of the last century. Artifacts illustrate immigrant life and the formation

of the first Little Italys. Souvenirs of Caruso, Toscanini, and DiMaggio are among the items on display. Temporary exhibits come through every couple of months.

28 W. 44th St., 17th floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/642-2020.** www.italianamericanmuseum.org. Mon–Thurs 10am–4pm. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.

The Judaica Museum of the Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale FREE This modest museum displays Judaica ranging from mezuzot to Persian ivory paintings to miniature folk-art arks. Stunning Hudson views provide additional incentive to make a jaunt to the Bronx.

5691 Palisade Ave., Riverdale, the Bronx. ✆ **718/581-1787.** www.hebrewhome.org/museum. Mon–Fri 10:30am–4:30pm. Subway: 1 to 242nd St.–Van Cortlandt Park.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center Museum FREE This isn't really a museum per se, but a community center that puts up exhibits in its hallways. There's a lot of erotic art, along with the occasional historical perspective, like an encapsulation of a San Francisco public library archive. The real gem in this building is the Keith Haring Bathroom. Converted to a meeting room on the second floor, this space pulsates with life thanks to a spectacular, salacious mural created by Haring shortly before his death.

208 W. 13th St., btw. Seventh and Greenwich aves. ✆ **212/620-7310.** www.gaycenter.org. Lobby open daily 9am–11pm. Subway: 1/2/3 or F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave.

FREE Broadway Stars

Given the city's light pollution, it would seem that whoever came up with the idea of building an observatory in Manhattan wasn't totally clear on the concept. Amazingly, however, some celestial sights do seep through our glowing night skies. On a Columbia University rooftop you can see for yourself. Select nights during the school year, professors and graduate students gloss the stars at the historic Rutherfurd Observatory, usually started off with a lecture and slideshow. There are also family nights for kids ages six to ten. The price for all this isn't astronomical—it's totally free. **Pupin Physics Laboratory,** 550 W. 120th St., btw. Broadway and Amsterdam Ave. Follow the signs to the roof. ✆ **212/854-1976.** www.astro.columbia.edu. Subway: 1 to 116th St./Columbia University. After sunset and weather permitting, of course.

Madame Alexander Heritage Gallery FREE Immigrant daughter and lifelong New Yorker Madame Beatrice Alexander Behrman pioneered doll making. Her version of *Gone With the Wind*'s Scarlett was the first doll to be based on a pop culture character. More on the story can be found in the Harlem headquarters, with its displays of photos, advertising, and, of course, dolls. Over 600 fill the display cases. You can also see dolls-under-construction in the factory, and dolls undergoing treatment at the doll hospital. Call ahead, as tours are by appointment only. Pediaphobes should steer clear.

615 W. 131st St., 6th floor, btw. Broadway and Twelfth Ave. ✆ **212/283-5900,** ext. 7128. www.madamealexander.com. Tours Mon, Wed, and Fri, 10am and 3pm, by appointment only. Subway: 1 to 125th St.

The Museum at FIT FREE This museum on the campus of the Fashion Institute of Technology is long on historic style, specializing in the 20th century. For contemporary looks, student shows are surprisingly sophisticated. Other rotating exhibits display items from the special collections, like accessories, sketches, or a circa-1870 mourning robe.

The southwest corner of Seventh Ave., at 27th St. ✆ **212/217-5970.** www.fitnyc.edu. Tues–Fri noon–8pm; Sat 10am–5pm. Subway: 1 to 28th St.

Museum of American Illustration FREE Illustrators never seem to get their proper respect as visual artists, constantly upstaged by showoff painters and photographers. The two galleries maintained by the Society of Illustrators strive to remedy that situation. Contest winners and works of society members can be found on the walls, along with classics from the permanent collection (the Society was formed in 1901, so there's a lot to fall back on). Exhibits change frequently.

28 E. 63rd St., btw. Park and Lexington aves. ✆ **212/838-2560.** www.societyillustrators.org. Tues 10am–8pm; Wed–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat noon–4pm. Subway: N/R/W/4/5/6 to 59th St.

National Museum of the American Indian FREE Housing Native American treasures in a former arm of the federal government seems a bit of a cruel irony, but the overall effect here is of reverence for endangered arts. This Smithsonian branch augments its exhibits with films and videos; check the schedule at www.nativenetworks.si.edu. There's programming for kids, too, including storybook readings and workshops. Everything is free, though craft workshops can have material fees of up to $25. Some events require reservations. See also p. 320.

1 Bowling Green, btw. State and Whitehall sts. ✆ **212/514-3700.** www.americanindian.si.edu. Daily 10am–5pm; Thurs until 8pm. Subway: 4/5 to Bowling Green; 1 to South Ferry.

Nesuhi Ertegun Jazz Hall of Fame FREE Although this museum is a little redundant—the displays are computer-based and replicate what's on the website—it's housed in a gorgeous space. Touch-activated "virtual plaques" and interactive kiosks tell the stories (and play the sounds) of the music's immortals.

Frederick P. Rose Hall in the Time Warner Center, 60th St. and Broadway, 5th floor. ✆ **212/258-9800.** www.jalc.org. Tues–Sun 10am–4pm and during concert hours. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

The New York City Police Museum FREE This museum borders on hagiography, but plenty of good little nuggets can be found here, including a 1933 letter from a private citizen suggesting police cars adopt "sirens." See p. 318 for a full review.

100 Old Slip, btw. Water and South sts., 2 blocks south of Wall St. ✆ **212/480-3100.** www.nycpolicemuseum.org. Suggested admission of $7 is not enforced. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm. Subway: 2/3 to Wall St.; J/M/Z to Broad St.

Nicholas Roerich Museum FREE One of New York's least-known museums showcases the Russian scholar and painter Nicholas Roerich. A genteel Riverside Drive town house holds three floors of galleries, cluttered with Roerich's paintings. The images favor Russian icons and Himalayan landscapes. Although the bright colors and stylized lines border on the cartoonish, the overall effect is impressive. Objects gathered in Roerich's Asian explorations are scattered throughout the museum, and a subtle spiritual air pervades. The museum's motto, Pax Cultura (Peace through Culture), gets expressed in a full schedule of free concerts and poetry readings. Music generally plays Sundays at 5pm; check online for additional dates and times.

319 W. 107th St., btw. Riverside Dr. and Broadway. ✆ **212/864-7752.** www.roerich.org. Tues–Sun 2–5pm. Subway: 1 to 110th St.

Onassis Cultural Center FREE Aristotle Onassis—or, as most of us know him, Mr. Jackie O—was the man behind this Midtown institution, which supports Hellenic art and culture. Winding stairs in the middle of the Olympic Tower atrium's south side lead to a warren of galleries with unexpected waterfall views. Samples from Byzantium show off the flat faces of a world before linear perspective was invented. Modern Greek efforts can often be found here as well. Free

FREE Socrates Sculpture Park

Among the most glamorous of New York's former industrial dumps, Socrates Sculpture Park brings large-scale modern art to the banks of the East River. The huge open field here encourages sculptors to spread out. The work, organic in feel and usually made by emerging artists, can give visitors the impression that a lot more than a river separates them from the chichi precincts of uptown Manhattan. Views back in that direction aren't too hard on the eyes, however. See p. 56 for the park's cinema series. 32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway. Long Island City, Queens. ✆ **718/956-1819.** www.socratessculpturepark.org. Daily 10am–sunset. Subway: N/W to Broadway. Walk 8 blocks along Broadway toward the East River.

tours are given on select Thursdays at 1pm. On the ground floor, a long-term display shows off rare casts of Parthenon marbles.

The Olympic Tower atrium, 641 Fifth Ave., entrance just east of Fifth on 51st or 52nd st. ✆ **212/486-4448.** www.onassisusa.org. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm. Subway: E/V to 53rd St.

Pratt Galleries FREE The fruits of Pratt Institute's prestigious arts and design programs can be found in the galleries the school runs. Current student shows are mixed in with alumni and faculty exhibitions, as well as those of other artistic innovators.

144 W. 14th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/647-7778.** www.pratt.edu. Tues–Sat 11am–6pm. Subway: 1/2/3 and F/V to 14th St.; L to Sixth Ave. Other location: *Schafler Gallery, Pratt campus,* 200 Willoughby Ave., Ft. Greene, Brooklyn. ✆ **718/636-3517.** Mon–Fri 9am–5pm. Subway: G to Clinton-Washington aves.

Scandinavia House FREE The Midtown headquarters of the Nordic Center in America is as stylish as the northern nations that spawned it. A third-floor gallery hosts contemporary art from the Norse nations, interspersed with historical looks, like a recent portrait series on Swedish actress Greta Garbo. The in-house restaurant, the AQ Café, is run by the Restaurant Aquavit folks and serves gourmet food at cafeteria prices.

58 Park Ave., btw. 37th and 38th sts. ✆ **212/879-9779.** www.scandinaviahouse.org. Tues–Sat noon–6pm. In summer, call ahead for schedule changes. Subway: 4/5/6/7/S to 42nd St./Grand Central; 6 to 33rd St.

SculptureCenter FREE Though this institution has been supporting and showcasing modern sculpture since 1928, its new home in a former Queens trolley repair shop can feel like a visit to a start-up. Maya Lin's industrial-chic design is of the moment, but many of the touches are timeless. Ceilings soar 40 feet in the main room, and the basement project spaces are like minimalist catacombs. The rough edges haven't been disguised, but the overall effect is still refined, a perfect backdrop for the contemporary sculptures and installation art exhibited here. I love this place—it's a miniature version of what the Tate Modern in London should have been.

44-19 Purves St., off Jackson Ave., Long Island City, Queens. ✆ **718/361-1750.** www.sculpture-center.org. Thurs–Mon 11am–6pm. There is a $5 suggested donation, not enforced. Subway: E/V to 23rd St./Ely. G or 7 to 45th Rd./Court House Sq.

Sony Wonder Technology Lab FREE Sony sucks in new generations of technology addicts with this four-level supermodern demonstration center, which has been recently overhauled. Kids can try their hands at robotics, medical imaging, and video game design, among other expensive toys. Free movies round out the stimuli; see p. 53 in chapter 2. FINE PRINT Call or check online for requirements for reserving in advance.

550 Madison Ave., at 56th St. ✆ **212/833-8100,** or 212/833-5414 for reservations. www.sonywondertechlab.com. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; last entrance 30 min. before closing. Subway: E/N/R/V/W to Fifth Ave.; 4/5/6 to 59th St.

Storefront for Art and Architecture FREE Designed with odd panels that expand into the street, this idiosyncratic institution does a lot with its very narrow space. Always intelligent exhibits explore architecture, art, and design.

97 Kenmare St., btw. Mulberry St. and Cleveland Place, near Lafayette St. ✆ **212/431-5795.** www.storefrontnews.org. Tues–Sat 11am–6pm. Subway: 6 to Spring St.; N/R/W to Prince St.

Tibet House U.S. FREE This institution presents Tibetan art through a small permanent collection and spacious temporary exhibits. See p. 305 for a review.

22 W. 15th St., 2nd floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/807-0563.** www.tibethouse.org. Mon–Fri noon–5pm. Subway: L/N/Q/R/W/4/5/6 to 14th St./Union Sq.

Urban Center FREE The landmark 1882 Villard Houses on Madison Avenue have an exclusive look, but the north side is actually open

to the public. Enter the central courtyard, designed by McKim, Mead & White to have the look of an Italian palazzo, and take the door on your left. The Municipal Art Society and the Architectural League of New York both keep galleries here, with rotating exhibits detailing a love of the city. While you're here, check out the bookstore's huge selection of urban planning and architecture tomes.

The Municipal Art Society, ✆ **212/935-3960.** www.mas.org. *Architectural League of New York,* ✆ **212/753-1722.** www.archleague.org. *Villard Houses,* 451–455 Madison Ave. Galleries open Mon–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–5pm. *Urban Center Books,* 457 Madison Ave. Mon–Fri 10am–6:30pm; Sat noon–5:30pm. ✆ **212/935-3595.** Subway: 6 to 51st St.

SOMETIMES FREE

Several museums that won't give up their goods for free full-time do set aside special hours and days where you can pay what you wish. Beware the last free day before an exhibition ends. More than a few procrastinators call New York home, and you'll find them gathered en masse for final free windows of opportunity.

American Folk Art Museum The new folk art building has generated some serious architectural buzz for its slender, modern design. Although the structure is fitting for a MoMA neighbor, its high-tech finishes can be something less than harmonious with the rustic works on display. Rotating exhibitions complement the permanent collection, which includes some amazing oddball autodidacts, including the world's largest collection of Henry Dargers. Friday evenings, when the museum is free, feature live music.

45 W. 53rd St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/265-1040.** www.folkartmuseum.org. Regular admission $9; free Fri after 5:30pm. Tues–Sun 10:30am–5:30pm; Fri 10:30am–7:30pm. Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave./53rd St.

Asia Society John D. Rockefeller III founded the Asia Society in the mid-fifties to encourage cultural exchanges and understanding between Asians and Americans. The newly renovated headquarters building has beautiful galleries, showing off parts of Rockefeller's collection in addition to rotating exhibits. The interior architecture is impressive, especially the sleek new staircase that looks like a snake's skeleton wandering up the floors.

725 Park Ave., at 70th St. ✆ **212/288-6400.** www.asiasociety.org. Regular admission $10; free Fri 6–9pm, except July 4th–Labor Day (regular hours). Tues–Sun 11am–6pm. Fri 11am–9pm. Subway: 6 to 68th St./Hunter College.

Sometimes Free (or Pay-What-You-Wish) Museums

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
China Institute (Tues 6–8pm)	Bronx Museum of the Arts (Wed noon–9pm)	Children's Museum of the Arts (Thurs 4–6pm)	Guggenheim Museum (Fri 6–8pm)	Brooklyn Museum of Art (First Sat 11am–11pm)	Frick Collection (Sun 11am–1pm)
	Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (Wed 4–8pm)	China Institute (Thurs 6–8pm)	International Center of Photography (Fri 5–8pm)	The Studio Museum in Harlem (First Sat 10am–6pm)	Museum of the City of New York (Sun 10am–noon)
		Dahesh Museum of Art (First Thurs 6–9pm)	The Morgan Library & Museum (Fri 7–9pm)		New York Hall of Science (Sun 10–11am, Sept–June)
		The Jewish Museum (Thurs 5–8pm)	Museum of Modern Art/ MoMA (Fri 4–8pm)		
		Museum of Arts and Design (Thurs 6–8pm)	Museum of Chinese in the Americas (Fri noon–7pm)		
		New Museum (Thurs 7–10pm)	The Museum of the Moving Image (Fri 4–8pm)		
			New York Hall of Science (Fri 2–5pm, Sept–June)		
			The Noguchi Museum (First Fri 10am–5pm)		
			The Rubin Museum of Art (Fri 7–10pm)		
			South Street Seaport Museum (Third Fri 5–9pm)		
			Whitney Museum of American Art (Fri 6–9pm)		

Bronx Museum of the Arts This hulk of modernity plunked down amid the Art Deco restraint of the Grand Concourse puts on adventurous shows. Most of the artists exhibited here have logged time as Boogie Down residents. If not, they'll represent some aspect of New York's

cultural diversity. Entrance is by a suggested admission, though the suggestion gets dropped all day Fridays, which are completely free.

1040 Grand Concourse, at 165th St., the Bronx. ✆ 718/681-6000. www.bxma.org. Suggested admission $5; free Fri all day. Mon, Thurs, Sat–Sun noon–6pm; Fri noon–8pm. Subway: B/D/4 to 161st St./Yankee Stadium.

Brooklyn Museum of Art The second-largest art museum in the US of A, the Brooklyn Museum is as spruced up and thriving as the borough that hosts it. With a glorious new entryway, remodeled exhibitions, and a building with over half a million square feet, there are several days' worth of exploring to be done here. The Egyptian collection is world-class and beautifully displayed, with informative, well-written notes accompanying each object. The fourth floor's period rooms are definitely worth a peek. Don't miss the Jan Schenck House, a touch of Dutch in old Breuckelen that somehow survived on the edge of Jamaica Bay from 1675 to 1952.

200 Eastern Pkwy., at Washington Ave., Brooklyn. ✆ 718/638-5000. www.brooklynmuseum.org. Suggested admission $8; free 1st Sat of the month 5–11pm. Wed–Fri 10am–5pm; 1st Sat of the month 11am–11pm; each Sat thereafter 11am–6pm; Sun 11am–6pm. Subway: 2/3 to Eastern Pkwy./Brooklyn Museum.

Children's Museum of the Arts This institution, on an industrial stretch between SoHo and Chinatown, is dedicated to getting kids involved with art. Kids 12 and under and families roll up their sleeves for informative workshops, which cover everything from puppet making to computer drawing. On the walls you'll find selections from the museum's permanent collection, including some great WPA pieces, or rotating exhibits of kid-friendly artists like Keith Haring. Call or check the website for the current exhibition and activities schedule.

182 Lafayette St., btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ 212/274-0986. www.cmany.org. Regular admission $9, but pay what you wish Thurs 4–6pm. Wed, Fri–Sun noon–5pm; Thurs noon–6pm. Subway: 6 to Spring St.

China Institute A scholarly approach informs the exhibits at this eighty-year-old culture and arts center. Two small, square galleries bookend the reception area and display traditional Chinese art, with beautifully crafted examples of calligraphy, painting, architecture, and textile work.

125 E. 65th St., btw. Park and Lexington aves. ✆ 212/744-8181. www.chinainstitute.org. Regular admission $7; free Tues and Thurs 6–8pm. Daily 10am–5pm (Tues and Thurs to 8pm). Subway: 6 to 68th St.–Hunter College.

FREE Date Night: Target First Saturdays at the Brooklyn Museum

One of New York's best cheap date opportunities comes once a month at the Brooklyn Museum. Every first Saturday the museum transforms itself into a house party on a massive scale. The crowd is more diverse than the U.N. General Assembly, with a dizzying range of ages, cultures, and castes represented. The museum keeps most of its galleries open for your perusal. When you run low on witty commentary, distractions like films and lectures beckon. Dance performances can be found, too, or if the date is going particularly well, you might let your feet work the floor yourself. The live music performances tend to be upbeat and very danceable. There's no charge for any of this, and nobody hits you up for a donation. The night is so festive that your date may not even notice just how cheap it's been. See the Brooklyn Museum review above for address and subway directions. Some attractions require tickets which, although free, may require standing on line.

Frick Collection Coke (the stuff for steel, not the soda or the stimulant) was very, very good to Henry Clay Frick, who was a Gilded Age plutocrat by the age of 30. When it came time to decorate the walls of his Upper East Side palace he looked to the likes of Titian, Vermeer, and Goya. Hank didn't skimp on the furniture or carpeting, either. Though there is a slightly musty quality to this place (it dates to 1914), the collection is undeniably impressive, and special exhibitions have lately garnered plenty of buzz.

1 E. 70th St., at Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/288-0700.** www.frick.org. Regular admission $15; pay what you wish Sun 11am–1pm. Tues–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Subway: 6 to 68th St.

Guggenheim Museum Artists complained bitterly about the curved walls that spiral up seven stories, but Frank Lloyd Wright knew what he was doing, and flat art mounts on the sides of the Guggie just fine. You'll feel like you're climbing through a nautilus shell as you view the latest installation in the central atrium, recently the host of Cai Guo-Qiang's startling nine-car cascade. A tower alongside the

spiral hosts a permanent collection stocked with Chagalls, Matisses, van Goghs, and Picassos. For a whole 120 minutes a week, on Friday nights, the Guggenheim lowers itself to letting regular folks poke around for free.

1071 Fifth Ave., at 88th St. ✆ 212/423-3500. www.guggenheim.org. Regular admission $18; pay what you wish Fri 5:45–7:45pm. Sat–Wed 10am–5:45pm; Fri 10am–7:45pm. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.

International Center of Photography The ICP does a good job of balancing photography's past and future, with Daguerreotypes and digital receiving as much wall time as the classic b&w street photographers of the '50s and '60s. Usually three separate exhibitions are up at any given time, except when the museum's two floors are turned over to a larger survey like contemporary African work, or the ICP Triennial, which showcases the best new photography.

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. ✆ 212/857-0000. www.icp.org. Regular admission $12; pay what you wish Fri 5–8pm. Tues–Thurs, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; Fri 10am–8pm. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.

Japan Society A waterfall trickling through a bamboo thicket welcomes you to this cultural institution near the U.N. The second floor has several rooms of galleries dedicated to Japanese art, ranging from classical Buddhist sculpture to photography to a spectacular recent exhibit of 19th-century lacquer masterworks.

333 E. 47th St., btw. First and Second aves. ✆ 212/832-1155. www.japansociety.org. Regular admission $12; free Fri 6–9pm. Tues–Thurs 11am–6pm; Fri 11am–9pm. Subway: 4/5/7/S to Grand Central; 6 to 51st St.

The Jewish Museum Four thousand years of Jewish history for this? Absolutely. A French Gothic chateau on the Upper East Side holds this remarkable collection, which chronicles the twists and turns of the Jewish experience, from a foundation stone of the third wall of Jerusalem to prints by Chagall. Lower floors handle temporary exhibits, like the terrific recent William Steig show.

1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St. ✆ 212/423-3200. www.thejewishmuseum.org. Regular admission $12; pay what you wish all day Sat. Sat–Wed 11am–5:45pm; Thurs 11am–8pm. Subway: 4/5 to 86th St.; 6 to 96th St.

The Morgan Library & Museum J.P. Morgan's collection of manuscripts, books, drawings, and prints has been housed in this McKim, Mead & White masterpiece since 1906. The building recently celebrated its centennial by doubling its public exhibition space with a

glass and steel Renzo Piano expansion. Lush original rooms are joined by two floors hosting exhibitions dedicated to photography, ancient cylinder seals, Bob Dylan ephemera, and the like.

225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. ✆ **212/685-0008.** www.themorgan.org. Regular admission is $12 adults, but free Fri 7–9pm. Tues–Thurs 10:30am–5pm; Fri 10:30am–9pm; Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 11am–6pm. Subway: 6 to 33rd St.

Museum of Chinese in America The Chinese-American population of New York City has more than doubled in just the last 20 years, so it's no surprise MOCA has left its original digs in a crumbling old public school. The new space (opening in Dec 2008) will be six times as large, and it'll bear Maya Lin's peerless touch. A core exhibit on the Chinese-American Experience will be supplemented by oral history projects, photo shows, and art installations.

211–215 Centre St., btw. Grand and Howard sts. ✆ **212/619-4785.** www.mocanyc.org. Adults $3; students and seniors $1. Tues–Sat noon–5pm. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.; B/D to Grand St.

Museum of the City of New York A gracious 1932 neo-Georgian mansion houses exhibits tracing NYC from the windmills of its Dutch colonial days up to its present status as the undisputed capital of the world. Lovely period rooms and a collection of theatrical memorabilia are highlights of the collection. The museum often throws in free music and film programs with the price of your admission.

Fifth Ave., at 103rd St. ✆ **212/534-1672.** www.mcny.org. Suggested admission $9; free 10am–noon Sun. Free also if you work or live in East Harlem (tell the desk you're a neighbor). Tues–Sun 10am–5pm. Subway: 6 to 103rd St.

Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust This institution's unwieldy name reflects its dual callings as museum and memorial. The six-sided original building has a permanent exhibit that puts a human face on the Holocaust. A recently completed new wing houses ambitious temporary exhibits. The renovation also brought an installation by sculptor Andy Goldsworthy. His *Garden of Stones* juts out towards New York Harbor, creating a contemplative space enlivened by dwarf oaks growing inside 18 hollow boulders. Though most of the time there is an admission charge to the museum, access to the garden is always free.

36 Battery Place, near Little West St. ✆ **646/437-4200.** www.mjhnyc.org. Regular admission $10; free Wed 4–8pm. Sun–Tues, Thurs 10am–5:45pm; Wed 10am–8pm; Fri 10am–5pm (closed 3pm during non-daylight saving time and on the eve of Jewish holidays). Subway: 4/5 to Bowling Green, R/W to Whitehall; 1 to South Ferry.

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) MoMA's nothing-left-to-chance makeover has resulted in a structure with the overall feel of a Fortune 500 headquarters. Of course, for $650 million, the finishes *should* look pretty damn nice. The stars of the permanent collection (Cézanne, Hesse, Mondrian) are joined by high-wattage temporary exhibitions. You'll pay through the nose for the privilege of wandering these sepulchral halls, except on Friday nights, which are free courtesy of corporate sponsorship and feature appallingly long lines. Is it just me, or could they have spent a little less on top-grade marble, and let the art be a little more accessible instead?

11 W. 53rd St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/708-9400. www.moma.org. Regular admission $20; free Fri 4–8pm. Wed–Thurs, Sat–Mon 10:30am–5:30pm; Fri 10:30am–8pm. Subway: E/V to Fifth Ave.

The Museum of the Moving Image Adolph Zuckor opened Astoria Studios in 1920 and the lot soon became the biggest this side of Hollywood. The site still hosts television and film production, two activities that fuel this nearby museum's obsession. Exhibits trace the moving image's evolution from 19th-century optical toys through film cameras and television sets. FINE PRINT The Museum is expanding and renovating and will be closed until late 2009.

35th Ave., at 36th St., Astoria, Queens. ✆ 718/784-0077. www.movingimage.us. Regular admission $10; free Fri 4–8pm (film screenings not included). Wed–Thurs 11am–5pm; Sat–Sun 11am–6:30pm; Fri 11am–8pm. Subway: G/R/V to Steinway St.

New Museum FREE "Maximum security" was my first thought when this gray hulk went up on the Bowery, and the caged-in ceiling of the foyer does little to dispel the prison vibe. That said, the free Thursday nights (take a ticket at the entrance and hop upstairs for three galleries of viewing pleasure) are really fun, presenting contemporary artwork that's generally low-fi, playful, and international in scope. Families can take advantage of free programs for kids on the first Saturday of each month (advance registration is required).

235 Bowery, btw. Stanton and Prince sts. ✆ 212/219-1222. www.newmuseum.org. Regular admission $12; free Thurs 7–10pm. Wed and Sat–Sun noon–6pm; Thurs–Fri noon–10pm. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.; J/M/Z to Bowery.

New York Hall of Science Nominally a hall of science, this place is really a big playground. The exhibits are hands on, letting kids get engulfed by a giant soap bubble, float on air in an antigravity mirror, and retrieve astronomical images from the depths of outer space. In

FREE No-Pressure Pier

The burnished public spaces at Chelsea Piers are attractive, but they lack the ramshackle charm of laid-back **Pier 66a,** just to the north. The pier itself is actually a 1946 Erie Lackawanna Railroad barge, connected to Manhattan by a restored Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Float Transfer Bridge. A 1946 E-L caboose, open for touring, is parked in the middle. On the water side, the Lightship Frying Pan—a 1929 floating lighthouse raised from the bottom of the Chesapeake Bay—is an unlikely nightclub. The most impressive boat on the pier is the John J. Harvey Fireboat (www.fireboat.org). It's a spectacular scene when this retired fire department mainstay (it was in service 1931–94, and temporarily brought out of retirement on 9/11) shoots its high-pressure hoses. Free public tours of the boat run sporadically, often in concert with other riverfront-themed events, and occasional free excursions leave from the Pier 66a dock. Just to the north is the lovely esplanade of Pier 66, which ends in an enigmatic timepiece in the form of a waterwheel. Pier 66 and 66a, the Hudson at 26th St. Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

summer the huge Outdoor Science Playground provides jungle gyms, slides, seesaws, and spinners to help the physics medicine go down.

47-01 111th St., in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, Queens. ✆ **718/699-0005.** www.nyhallsci.org. Regular admission $11; free Fri 2–5pm, Sun 10–11am (Sept 1–June 30 only). July–Aug Mon–Fri 9:30am–5pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; Sept 1–June 30 Tues–Thurs 9:30am–2pm, Fri 9:30am–5pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm. Subway: 7 to 111th St.

The Noguchi Museum Many New Yorkers have passed the Red Cube sculpture on lower Broadway, the stainless-steel plaque at the AP's headquarters in Rockefeller Center, and the sunken garden at the Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza, without realizing they're all by Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi's former home/studio shows off additional creativity in transforming a photo-engraving plant into a graceful oasis in the midst of industrial Queens. Renovated in 2004 and 2008, the museum features galleries of Noguchi's sculptural and architectural forms, and a tranquil birch-shaded sculpture garden.

9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City, Queens. ✆ **718/204-7088.** www.noguchi.org. Regular admission $10; pay what you wish the 1st Fri of the month.

Wed–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat–Sun 11am–6pm. Subway: N/W to Broadway. Walk 8 blocks along Broadway toward the East River.

The Rubin Museum of Art Occidentals finally got a Himalayan art museum of their own when the Rubin opened up in 2004. A marble and steel spiral staircase, the focal point of the Barneys department store that was the previous tenant, winds through seven floors of painting, sculpture, and textiles. Though bodhisattvas and mandalas may be esoteric to some, wall texts provide helpful background. On Friday nights (p. 50), when entry to the museum is free, you can catch a tour with a contemporary artist and learn even more.

150 W. 17th St., btw. Sixth and Seventh aves. ✆ **212/620-5000.** www.rmanyc.org. Regular admission $10; free Fri 7–10pm. Mon and Thurs 11am–5pm; Wed 11am–7pm; Fri 11am–10pm; Sat–Sun 11am–6pm. Subway: 1/2/3/F/L to 14th St.

South Street Seaport Museum The half-dozen counting houses that make up Schermerhorn Row were built in 1812 and still carry that era's low-rise, red brick charm. Artfully hollowed out and converted to gallery space, they now hold collections of ship portraits, Far East souvenirs, and scrimshaw that illuminate NYC's extensive maritime heritage. Every third Friday of the month, the museum is free; stop in at the main visitor's center for a ticket, a calendar of that night's events (most geared toward kids), and directions to other free nearby galleries.

12 Fulton St., btw. Front and South sts. ✆ **212/748-8600.** www.southstseaport.org. Regular admission $8; free every 3rd Fri 5–8:45pm. Apr–Oct Tues–Sun 10am–6pm; Nov–Mar Fri–Mon 10am–5pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5/A/C/J/M/Z to Fulton St.

The Studio Museum in Harlem Dedicated to the art of African Americans, with a sideline on the African Diaspora, this small museum has gathered together a terrific permanent collection. Exhibits rotate frequently and the calendar is packed with freebies. There are poetry readings, dance, forums, and open studios for the A-I-R program, which shows off the Artists in Residence that the Studio Museum helps support.

144 W. 125th St., btw. Lenox Ave. and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. ✆ **212/864-4500.** www.studiomuseuminharlem.org. Suggested admission $7; free 1st Sat of the month. Sun, Wed–Fri noon–6pm; Sat 10am–6pm. Subway: 2/3 to 125th St.

Whitney Museum of American Art Behind somewhat imposing Bauhaus walls on Madison Avenue lies a spectacular collection of 20th-century art. The Whitney is rich in Edward Hoppers, Louise

Nevelsons, and Georgia O'Keeffes, and they're good about rotating the permanent collection through their upper galleries. Shows of contemporary artists on other floors tend to be surprisingly cutting edge for a big Uptown institution. The legendary Whitney Biannual—love it or hate it (or both)—is the institution's biggest draw.

945 Madison Ave., at 75th St. ✆ **212/570-3676.** www.whitney.org. Regular admission $15; pay what you wish Fri after 6pm. Wed–Thurs and Sat–Sun 11am–6pm; Fri 1–9pm. Subway: 6 to 77th St.

SUGGESTED ADMISSIONS

Many New York institutions let in visitors on the basis of a "suggested admission." The price you have pay isn't set in stone; it's set by the dictates of your own conscience. Before you decide how much to give, remember that you're already giving if you pay local taxes. We working stiffs support the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, the largest agency of its kind in the U.S. In 2007, the agency had $167 million set aside for expenses. It also had its largest capital budget yet, with another $1.4 billion (!) spread over 4 years. Cultural Affairs helps fund dozens of local institutions, many of which are owned by the city (and by extension, you and me). Sometimes $1 seems like the right amount to be spending on one's own museum. That's not to say if you're flush you should be stiffing these institutions, which do spectacular work. If you've got a spare couple of bucks, by all means toss them in the hat.

American Museum of Natural History It's easy to lose yourself within the 4-square-block walls of this legendary museum. Low-profile sections still have the dingy lighting and old-fashioned lettering of a few decades ago, but the big players received radical upgrades. Dinosaurs have been brought into the 21st century and $210 million has space-aged the Planetarium. With that big an outlay, the museum likes to see its full $15 admission when you come, although technically it's only a suggestion and you can pay what you wish.

Central Park W., btw. 77th and 81st sts. ✆ **212/769-5100** for information, or ✆ 212/769-5200 for tickets (tickets can also be ordered online). www.amnh.org. Suggested admission $15. Space Show and museum admission together are $22, plus additional charges for IMAX movies and some of the special exhibitions. Daily 10am–5:45pm; Rose Center open 1st Fri of the month 10am–8:45pm. Subway: B/C to 81st St., 1 to 79th St.

The City Reliquary FREE This micro museum is dedicated to the detritus of NYC, with an eye toward quirky collections like vintage

thermoses and found snapshots. The permanent collection holds subway tokens and false teeth washed up in Dead Horse Bay. In addition to the small storefront gallery (entry is by a $1 suggested donation), there's a window display on nearby Grand Street, which was the institution's original inspiration.

370 Metropolitan Ave., btw. Havemeyer St. and Rev. Dr. Gardner C. Taylor Blvd., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Suggested admission $1. ✆ 718/782-4842. www.cityreliquary.org. Sat–Sun noon–6pm. *Window display*, 307 Grand St., at Havemeyer St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Subway to both locations: G/L Lorimer St.–Metropolitan Ave.

The Cloisters This Met subsidiary is one of the city's most unlikely treasures. Situated on a Hudson cliff side, the Cloisters is a Frankenstein-esque amalgamation of medieval architecture: a Romanesque chapel, a 12th-century Spanish apse, and portions of cloisters from five different monasteries. The building is surrounded by tranquil gardens. If you've ever wondered why the Palisades in Jersey aren't more developed, it's because John D. Rockefeller, Jr., bought up the land there to preserve this view.

North end of Fort Tryon Park. ✆ 212/923-3700. www.metmuseum.org. Suggested admission $20. Nov–Feb Tues–Sun 9:30am–4:45pm; Mar–Oct Tues–Sun 9:30am–5:15pm. Subway: A to 190th St., then a 10-min. walk north along Margaret Corbin Dr., or pick up the M4 bus at the station (1 stop to Cloisters). Or take the M4 Madison Ave. to Fort Tryon Park–The Cloisters.

El Museo del Barrio A school classroom display was the genesis for this Museum Mile institution, the only U.S. museum dedicated to Puerto Rican, Caribbean, and Latin American art. The artistic history of the region, from pre-Columbian origins to the present, is recounted in a permanent installation. Changing exhibitions cover contemporary subjects and artists.

1230 Fifth Ave., at 104th St. ✆ 212/831-7272. www.elmuseo.org. Suggested admission $6. Wed–Sun 11am–5pm. Subway: 6 to 103rd St.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art On the Upper East Side, tucked away just off Central Park, you can find this undiscovered little gem of a collection. Allow yourself a good 10 minutes to see everything they've got. Yeah, well, the Met is the 800-pound gorilla of New York's museum scene, and it's not hiding from anybody. If it's not the greatest museum in the world, it must be damn close, and it's all right there for the price of a suggested admission.

Fifth Ave., at 82nd St. ✆ **212/535-7710.** www.metmuseum.org. Suggested admission $20. Tues–Thurs, Sun 9:30am–5:30pm; Fri–Sat 9:30am–9pm; Mon 9:30am–5:30pm on select holidays only. Subway: 4/5/6 to 86th St.

Museum of Biblical Art FREE With its de rigueur acronym, MOBIA makes a game effort to fit in with its museum brethren in the heart of New Gomorrah. Exhibition subjects have ranged from oil lamps of the Holy Land to engravings by Fauvist Georges Rouault. Pagans and Satanists may tire quickly, as shows are limited to Judeo-Christian expressions. Gallery talks and lectures are also on offer, usually for free. FINE PRINT Event seating is limited, so you may want to reserve in advance.

FREE Governors Island

Native Americans called it *Pagganck* ("Nut Island"), the Dutch called it *Noten Eylant,* and until 1995 3,500 Coast Guard members and their families called it home. Today, the former military base that is Governors Island has been set aside for public use. During the summer visitors can wander past abandoned mansions, forts, and bucolic parade grounds. It's all free, with a lovely ferry ride across New York Harbor thrown in as well (Brooklynites can reach the island directly via the New York Water Taxi for a fee). The breathtaking views make this New York's most ideal picnic spot. The ferry leaves from lower Manhattan every hour on the hour from 10am to 3pm on Fridays and from 10am to 5pm on Saturdays and Sundays in June, July, and August. During these same months, rangers give 90-minute tours (leaving Manhattan at 10am and 1pm) of the northern half of the island, on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Additional ranger-led tours run on the weekends. Space on the ferries is limited, first-come, first-served. The island was only transferred to the public in 2003, so check the website, as policies may be no more permanent than a name. (See also p. 44 for two great free music series.) Battery Maritime Building, 10 South St., btw. Broad and Whitehall sts. ✆ **212/440-2202.** www.nps.gov/gois. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 1 to South Ferry.

1865 Broadway, at W. 61st St. ✆ **212/408-1500.** www.mobia.org. Suggested admission $7. Tues–Wed, Fri–Sun 10am–6pm; Thurs 10am–8pm. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

New York City Fire Museum FDNY Engine Co. 30's former home holds an impressive collection of fire-service memorabilia. Exhibits range from the 18th century to the present, where the most poignant materials can be found. During the 9/11 attacks, 343 firefighters gave their lives just a few blocks south of the museum.

278 Spring St., btw. Varick and Hudson sts. ✆ **212/691-1303.** www.nycfiremuseum.org. Suggested admission $5; free if you live or work in SoHo (tell the desk you're a neighbor). Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 10am–4pm. Subway: C/E to Spring St.

P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center School is out, replaced by art that's in, inside this 19th-century former public school. The Renaissance Revival building has been beautifully converted, with avant-garde shows rotating through the former classrooms. Now affiliated with MoMA, P.S. 1 does a terrific job of bringing fresh, intriguing art to Queens. Don't miss James Turrell's "Meeting" on the top floor, which frames the dusk sky in an extraordinary way.

22-25 Jackson Ave., Long Island City, Queens. ✆ **718/784-2084.** www.ps1.org. Suggested admission $5. Thurs–Mon noon–6pm. Subway: E/V to 23rd St./Ely Ave.; G to 21st St./Van Alst; 7 to 45th Rd./Court House Sq.

Queens Museum of Art This museum has reproductions of Greek marbles and some nice Tiffany glass, but the real draw is the Panorama of New York City, the world's largest scale model. Every single building in the five boroughs is represented, in addition to every street and bridge, and even airplanes that take off and land at a tiny LaGuardia. The Museum is located in Corona Park, on the site of the legendary 1964 World's Fair. Don't miss the nearby Unisphere, a highlight of the fair and the largest representation of Earth that we humans have cooked up yet. Twelve gleaming stories high, the Unisphere will give you a good idea of what the planet looks like from 6,000 miles in space.

Next to the Unisphere in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens. ✆ **718/592-9700.** www.queensmuseum.org. Suggested admission $5. Sept–June Wed–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat–Sun noon–5pm; July–Aug Wed–Thurs and Sat–Sun noon–5pm, Fri noon–8pm. Subway: 7 to Willets Point/Shea Stadium; follow signs through the park.

This Old House

I find it amazing than anything can survive for long in NYC, especially old houses that don't do anything except clog up prime real estate. The Historic House Trust of New York City has information on 21 surviving dwellings, spread across all five boroughs. Admissions are usually under $5, which is not bad for the opportunity to travel back in time a century or two. Information is available at ✆ **212/360-3448,** or www.historichousetrust.org.

Dyckman Farmhouse Museum The Dyckman family farmed upper Broadway for two centuries. Three generations called this original Dutch farmhouse home, and their descendents outfitted its museum incarnation with period pieces. In the garden you'll find an original smokehouse and a Revolutionary War–era Hessian hut. 4881 Broadway, at 204th St. ✆ **212/304-9422.** www.dyckmanfarmhouse.org. Admission $1. Wed–Sat 11am–4pm; Sun noon–4pm. Subway: A/1 to 207th St.

Edgar Allan Poe Cottage Happy-go-lucky Virginian E. A. P. moved to the Bronx in 1846, hoping that the country air would be good for his tubercular wife. She died the next year, and Poe himself checked out only a couple of years later. The cottage is now an anomaly among brick high-rises. The interior has period furnishings and Poe exhibits. 2460 Grand Concourse, at E. Kingsbridge Rd. ✆ **718/881-8900.** www.bronxhistoricalsociety.org. Admission $5. Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 1–5pm. Subway: D/4 to Kingsbridge Rd.

The Morris-Jumel Mansion One of Manhattan's coolest surprises is coming upon the grounds of the Morris-Jumel Mansion in the midst of monolithic Harlem apartment buildings. This genteel Palladian wonder is the oldest house in Manhattan, built in 1765 as a summer getaway. There isn't much land left on the plot, but what remains is pleasant to stroll around. You have to pay to enter the house, which provides a fascinating snapshot of its era. ***Tip:*** Don't miss picturesque Sylvan Terrace across the street (just west of the mansion), one of the city's last blocks of wooden workers' row houses. 65 Jumel Terrace at 160th St., east of St. Nicholas Ave. ✆ **212/923-8008.** www.morrisjumel.org. Admission $4. Wed–Sun 10am–4pm. Subway: C to 163rd St.

DIRT CHEAP

Fraunces Tavern Museum A small museum above the tavern and restaurant shows off the building's illustrious history along with scattered relics of colonial life. See p. 319 for a full review.

54 Pearl St., near Broad St. ✆ **212/425-1778.** www.frauncestavernmuseum.org. Admission $4. Mon–Sat noon–5pm. Subway: R/W to Whitehall; 1 to South Ferry; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace Though not the original birthplace, this historic site is a deft reproduction of the place where T. R. spent his first 14 years. See p. 305 for a full review.

28 E. 20th St., btw. Broadway and Park Ave. S. ✆ **212/260-1616.** www.nps.gov/thrb. Admission $3. Tues–Sat 9am–5pm (tours hourly 10am–4pm). Subway: N/R/W to Broadway/23rd St.; 6 to 23rd St.

FREE EXHIBITS AT THE LIBRARIES

Free books are just the beginning with New York's libraries. In addition to free classes (p. 152) and free films (p. 59), Gothamites also get free exhibitions. The libraries really care about their material, which comes through in the surprisingly well-crafted displays.

Brooklyn Public Library FREE The galleries here present everything from painting to installation art to rare books. The works and the artists often have a local connection.

Grand Army Plaza. ✆ **718/230-2100.** www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org. Tues–Thurs 9am–9pm; Fri 9am–6pm; Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 1–6pm. Subway: 2/3 to Grand Army Plaza.

Humanities and Social Sciences Library FREE Many local fans of the writer A. A. Milne don't realize that Winnie-the-Pooh has been a fellow Manhattan resident for over half a century. Pooh and friends Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, and Tigger are all on display here. These are Christopher's actual stuffed animals, instantly recognizable from their portrayals on the page. Though they look a little forlorn for being stuck behind glass, they've held up pretty well for 80-year-olds. The other book- and manuscript-themed exhibits here are lovingly displayed and as well written as you'd expect from a library. See p. 310 for a full review.

Fifth Ave., at 42nd St. ✆ **212/869-8089** exhibits and events, or 212/661-7220 for library hours. www.nypl.org. Mon, Thurs–Sat 11am–6pm; Tues–Wed 11am–7:30pm; Sun 1–5pm. Subway: B/D/F/V to 42nd St.; 7 to Fifth Ave.; 4/5/6/S to Grand Central.

Moving Views

Straphangers get treated to a few spectacular scenes in exchange for their swipes. I love the 7 line as it approaches Manhattan from Queens. The track twists and turns like a slo-mo roller coaster with the Midtown skyline in the background. The J/M/Z ride across the Williamsburg has great views from windows north and south. The Manhattan Bridge gives B/D/N/Q riders dramatic East River vistas.

The most thrilling public transportation ride is the Roosevelt Island Tram (✆ **212/832-4555**). As you dangle in the air over the East River you get the East Side skyline, plus the U.N., plus great sightlines on the engineering marvels of the East River bridges. You also get the knowledge that one day in 2006 the tram stalled out for hours, stranding passengers without much of an evacuation plan. This frisson of actual danger comes free with the $2 one-way price (if you're on an unlimited Metrocard plan, you can get back via the F train's Roosevelt Island stop, just a few blocks away). The trip between 60th Street and Second Avenue and Roosevelt Island takes about 4 minutes. The Tram operates daily 6am to 2am; until 3:30am on weekends.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts FREE This library branch is a performance clearinghouse, conveniently located near the arts central that is Lincoln Center. Performing arts exhibitions can be found in the Donald and Mary Oenslager Gallery.

40 Lincoln Center Plaza, btw. 64th and 65th sts. ✆ **212/870-1630.** www.nypl.org. Tues–Wed, Fri 11am–6pm; Mon, Thurs noon–8pm; Sat 10am–6pm. Subway: 1 to 66th St.

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture FREE The massive collection of books and art gathered by bibliophile Arturo Alfonso Schomburg is housed at this research branch of the New York Public Library. The Exhibition Hall, the Latimer/Edison Gallery, and the Reading Room all host exhibits related to black culture. Talks and performing arts are also part of the program here. Call or check online for scheduling details.

515 Malcolm X Blvd., at Lenox Ave., btw. 135th and 136th sts. ✆ **212/491-2200.** www.nypl.org. Mon–Wed noon–8pm; Thurs–Fri 11am–6pm; Sat 10am–5pm. Subway: 2/3 to 135th St.

2 Gallery Scene

Art galleries may be Gotham's greatest free cultural resource. Not only do these minimuseums provide us with works of inspiration, but they also give us free booze and snacks at their openings. Don't be shy about barging into a show with million-dollar pieces. Gallery owners are almost as happy raising the profiles of their artists as they are closing a sale; both are essential for upping the prices they charge. We should also take a moment to be thankful for the tech stock boom. Not only did we all make a killing on our stock options, but the dot.coms also made it possible for scruffy people in jeans and sneakers to be stealth millionaires. Gallery owners and employees can no longer easily distinguish between the underemployed and walking gold mines, meaning that our presence in galleries is not merely tolerated, but actively sought and desired.

Sources

The local papers provide rundowns on the higher profile shows. The ***Village Voice*** has good listings, which can also be perused online (www.villagevoice.com). The ***New York Times, New York*** magazine, ***Time Out New York,*** and the ***New Yorker*** all provide extensive listing information, both on- and offline.

If you want invitations to openings, you have a couple of options. You can sign in whenever you visit a gallery and they'll keep you informed, or you can check online. Douglas Kelly keeps an amazingly comprehensive list of gallery openings at **http://dks.thing.net**. All galleries are open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm unless otherwise noted. Many openings are on Thursday nights. Summers can be pretty dead in the art world, and many galleries keep shorter hours, often closing on Saturdays.

CHELSEA

New York's big-money art scene has put most of its eggs in one basket by clustering galleries between Tenth and Eleventh avenues. For the gallery fan, this means you can visit hundreds of shows without

FREE Watching the Auction Action

Sure, you know all about New York's auction scene, the way you follow a stranger in, take an inconspicuous seat off to the side, and try to suppress a sneeze just as a gavel comes down to announce you're the proud owner of a $50,000 Ming vase. But there's more to New York auction houses than expensive misunderstandings and antitrust violations. Viewings and sale previews are excellent chances to treat upcoming lots as museum exhibits. The current top house is **Christie's,** at 20 Rockefeller Plaza, 49th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues (✆ **212/636-2000;** www.christies.com). **Sotheby's** runs a close second on the Upper East Side, 1334 York Ave., at 72nd Street (✆ **212/606-7000;** www.sothebys.com). There are two often-overlooked smaller houses that sell equally intriguing artifacts. **Guernsey's,** 108½ E. 73rd St., between Park and Lexington avenues (✆ **212/794-2280;** www.guernseys.com), focuses on modern collections and memorabilia. The city's oldest privately owned house is **Tepper Galleries** at 110 E. 25th St., between Park and Lexington avenues (✆ **212/677-5300;** www.teppergalleries.com). Fine and decorative arts shows and estate sales are the specialties of the house, with previews usually held on Fridays.

Full calendars for all houses are available online.

ever leaving **the lower West 20s.** The geography also rewards the serendipitous, allowing for quick pop-ins at randomly selected spaces. Not interested in a bunch of paint splotches on scattered brillo pads? Pop right back out. My favorite strategy is to write down some interesting-sounding shows from the listings in the *Voice* and then hit a few of their unlisted neighbors. With floor after floor of galleries in the old warehouse buildings here, you're bound to find something of interest.

Subway: C/E to 23rd St.

David Zwirner FREE One of many SoHo refugees, Zwirner shows a range of interesting, inventive art, usually from emerging artists. His Chelsea holdings now cover three separate units on West 19th St.

519, 525, and 533 W. 19th St., btw. Tenth Ave. and West St. ✆ **212/727-2070.** www.davidzwirner.com.

Gagosian Gallery FREE Perhaps the heaviest hitter around, this gallery puts on major shows in a space large enough to accommodate sculptures by Richard Serra.

555 W. 24th St., btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ **212/741-1111.** www.gagosian.com.

Matthew Marks Gallery FREE Matthew Marks has built a miniempire in west Chelsea. His four galleries show top-tier painting, photography, and sculpture.

523 W. 24th; 522 W. 22nd; 526 W. 22nd; 521 W. 21st, all btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ **212/243-0200.** www.matthewmarks.com.

Roebling Hall FREE One of the oldest and best Brooklyn galleries comes to the big town, bringing original takes on painting, photography, and sculpture.

606 W. 26th St., near Eleventh Ave. ✆ **212/929-8180.** www.roeblinghall.com.

FREE Photo Ops

Two of my favorite photo galleries can be found at 535 West 22nd Street, between Tenth and Eleventh avenues. This building has a bunch of interesting galleries for spontaneous pop-ins. **Julie Saul** (✆ **212/627-2410;** www.saulgallery.com) brings in up-and-coming contemporary photography, while **Yancey Richardson** (✆ **646/230-9610;** www.yanceyrichardson.com) represents an impressive stable of big names and new innovators.

Another photo scene worth checking out is at **Sepia,** which is a gallery and historical archive hybrid. A huge space far from Chelsea's beaten track brings in some great, overlooked international work (148 W. 24th St., 11th floor, btw. Sixth and Seventh aves.; ✆ **212/645-9444;** www.sepia.org).

DOWNTOWN

In the early and mid-'80s, the headquarters of New York's avant-garde was the East Village. Tiny galleries dotted the landscape and helped break the era's big names. The stock market crash of '87 put an abrupt end to frivolous spending, and most of the galleries withered away. It's taken more than a decade, but galleries are just now returning. Throughout the **East Village** and **Lower East Side,** and even into **Chinatown,** storefront operations

FREE SoHo's Secret Installations

The **DIA Foundation for the Arts** maintains a pair of hidden galleries with eccentric conceptual works by Walter De Maria (✆ **212/989-5566;** www.diacenter.org). Both galleries are open from Wednesday to Sunday from noon to 6pm (closed 3–3:30pm), and are closed in summer.

The Broken Kilometer A few blocks away you can find a gallery floor covered with orderly rows of solid brass rods. Placed end to end, the 500 rods would stretch exactly—yup, 1 kilometer. (Its sister piece, a sculpture with identical, unbroken brass rods buried vertically in the ground, is in Germany.) 393 West Broadway, btw. Spring and Broome sts. www.brokenkilometer.org.

New York Earth Room As the name suggests, it's a room full of dirt. Really—140 tons of soil filling up a SoHo loft to a depth of almost 2 feet. It's an oddly compelling sight in the middle of the city, and the rich earthy scent is almost refreshing. 141 Wooster St., btw. Houston and Prince sts. www.earthroom.org.

are coming to life. SoHo, conversely, continues to atrophy as an art scene. The galleries can't afford the rents, and every year there are fewer and fewer hanging on. However, a few institutions are firmly embedded in the area, and they put on some of the best shows.

Subway: *SoHo,* N/R/W to Prince; C/E to Spring. *Lower East Side/Chinatown,* B/D to Grand St.; F to Delancey St.; J/M/Z to Essex St. *East Village,* F/V to Second Ave.

Artists Space Young artists get exposure on the walls of this SoHo collective. Near year's end, cheapskate fine-art collectors take advantage of the space's "Night of 1,000 Drawings" benefit. Ten dollars nets you an open bar and the chance to buy original one-of-a-kind drawings for $35 to $60 a pop. Submit a drawing in advance and you can keep your $10.

38 Greene St., 3rd floor, btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ **212/226-3970.** www.artistsspace.org.

Deitch Projects FREE SoHo standby Deitch puts up inventive shows, usually a lot more fun than anything else in the neighborhood.

Two nearby locations. See "The Art Parade" (p. 25), which the gallery co-sponsors.

76 Grand St., btw. Wooster and Greene sts.; 18 Wooster St., btw. Grand and Canal sts. ✆ 212/343-7300. www.deitch.com.

The Drawing Center FREE This downtown institution supports the often-overlooked discipline of drawing. Two spaces across the street from each other present simultaneous shows. Lectures and screenings, some of which are free, add to the "draw" here.

35 and 40 Wooster St., btw. Broome and Grand sts. ✆ 212/269-2166. www.drawingcenter.org.

Swiss Institute FREE The artists shown here usually have a Swiss connection. Innovative project ideas include the Institute's "Extension 17 project" featuring free audio art (Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon contributed one)—just call the Institute and dial ext. 17.

495 Broadway, 3rd floor, btw. Broome and Spring sts. ✆ 212/925-2035. www.swissinstitute.net.

MIDTOWN/UPTOWN

With the avant-garde ensconced downtown and in Brooklyn, the galleries that breathe the rarified air of the Upper East Side tend toward the staid side. Art here is of a classic bent, though the definition of classic is pretty elastic these days. Expect to see master works ranging from the Renaissance to the last couple of decades. And if you thought the asking prices were wacky downtown, wait until you see these . . .

Subway: 6 to 68th St.; F to 63rd St.; N/R/W or 4/5/6 to 59th St.

Americas Society Art Gallery FREE The Americas, from Canada all the way down to Patagonia, are the focus of art shows here.

680 Park Ave., at 68th St. ✆ 212/249-8950. www.americas-society.org. **Wed-Sun noon-6pm.**

Hirschl & Adler Galleries FREE Five floors of galleries display 18th- to 20th-century European and American painting and decorative arts in an exquisite landmark town house.

21 E. 70th St., btw. Fifth and Madison aves. ✆ 212/535-8810. www.hirschlandadler.com.

Pace Wildenstein FREE Modernism is the new classicism, and this gallery specializes in the best of it.

32 E. 57th St., btw. Fifth and Madison aves. ✆ **212/421-3292.** www.pacewildenstein.com. Other locations: *Chelsea,* 534 W. 25th St. and 545 W. 22nd St., btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ **212/929-7001.**

Richard L. Feigen & Co. FREE Master works of the last few centuries are the focus here.

34 E. 69th St., btw. Park and Madison aves. ✆ **212/628-0700.** www.rlfeigen.com.

Wildenstein FREE This gallery has over a century's experience in handling huge-ticket items. Renaissance and Impressionism treasures are a specialty.

19 E. 64th St., btw. Fifth and Madison aves. ✆ **212/879-0500.** www.wildenstein.com.

WILLIAMSBURG

Not so long ago, Williamsburg's orthodox Jewish population distributed petitions asking for help from above to stem the "plague of the artists" that encroaches on their community. There's been no immediate response from G-d, but I'd bet that the plague continues to rage for the foreseeable future, as artists flock to Brooklyn and overrun Bedford's hipster boundaries. Though it's still more DIY and low-budget than Manhattan's galleries, the scene here is catching up quickly. The only drawback is that the spaces are spread far apart. To make a full tour here, be prepared to trek some blocks. ***Note:*** Brooklyn galleries keep different hours from the Manhattan side; many are open from Friday to Monday, or weekends only.

Subway: L to Bedford Ave. or Lorimer St.; J/M/Z to Marcy Ave.; G to Metropolitan Ave.

Jack the Pelican FREE This gallery's co-directors have backgrounds in anthropology and curating, making for both intelligent and aesthetic shows.

487 Driggs Ave., btw. 9th and 10th sts. ✆ **718/782-0183.** www.jackthepelicanpresents.com. Thurs–Mon noon–6pm.

Pierogi 2000 FREE This small, well-established gallery hangs some of the best painting to be found in Brooklyn. Photo and installation work also go on display, often in the context of intriguing group shows. If you're in need of further visual stimuli, some 750 artists are

browsable in the gallery's constantly evolving (and traveling) Flat Files collection.

177 N. 9th St., btw. Bedford and Driggs aves. ✆ **718/599-2144.** www.pierogi2000.com. Thurs–Mon 11am–6pm.

Secret Project Robot FREE This huge warehouse space serves up experimental contemporary art, and works as a launching pad for related live music and art party events.

210 Kent Ave., at Metropolitan Ave. ✆ **917/860-8282.** www.wahcenter.net. Sat–Sun noon–5pm.

Williamsburg Art and Historical Center FREE Housed in an amazing 1867 bank building, this community center is always good for an intriguing art exhibit or two.

135 Broadway, at Bedford St. ✆ **718/486-7372.** www.wahcenter.net. Sat–Sun noon–6pm.

3 Open Studios & Art Fests

Run-down industrial neighborhoods beget artist populations, as the creatively minded come in for cheap, raw studio space. In the old days a few neighbors would open their doors one weekend to show off their work to friends and their floormates' friends. With the explosion of New York's artist population, things have become more organized than the old flier-on-a-light-post invitation system. Several neighborhoods now offer full-blown arts festivals, with music, installations, theater, and gallery events supplementing open studios.

Annual Gowanus Artists Studio Tour FREE Gowanus Canal boosters claim the neighborhood is destined to be New York's answer to Venice, but you probably have a couple of decades left before the crumbling brick warehouses give way to marble palaces and singing gondoliers. The arts scene here leans toward the artsy-craftsy, but there's definitely some talent, and the spaces are great. The AGAST tour is held on the third weekend of October, over territory that stretches between Park Slope, Red Hook, and Carroll Gardens.

Gowanus Canal and surrounding areas, in Brooklyn. ✆ **718/393-8383.** www.gowanusartists.com. Sat–Sun 1–6pm. Subway: F/G to Carroll St.

Bushwick Open Studios and Arts Festival (B.O.S.) FREE Bushwick is starting to feel a little like the old East Village, with a committed core of artistic pioneers and a coalescing sense of community.

The studios here are generally in old factories, with semi-legal living quarters set up amid the canvases and installations. Beyond the voyeuristic pleasures of scoping out strangers' homes, there's tons of free music, free beer, and great art.

Bushwick, Brooklyn. www.bushwickopenstudios.com. Fri night performances; studios open Sat–Sun noon–7pm. Subway: L to Morgan Ave., Montrose Ave., Jefferson St., or DeKalb Ave.; J/M/Z to Myrtle Ave., J to Gates Ave. or Flushing Ave.

DAC Art Under the Bridge Festival FREE The city's preeminent arts fest belongs to DUMBO, where yupster incursions have yet to fully displace the artists whose studios fill these broad-shouldered warehouses. This is probably the best art crop in town, which may or may not be related to the inspiring Manhattan views you'll find through many an artist's window. The festival also features music, dance, video, and gallery extravaganzas, and most of it is free.

DUMBO, Brooklyn. ✆ 718/694-0831. www.dumboartscenter.org. Usually the last weekend in Sept. Subway: F to York St.; A/C to High St.

EFA Studio Center FREE The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts provides 110 artists with subsidized workspaces in Midtown. At least half the artists show off their work at the annual open studios over the third weekend in October. A new gallery space on the second floor provides additional art-viewing opportunities.

323 W. 39th St., btw. Eighth and Ninth aves. ✆ 212/563-5855. www.efa1.org. Open studio hours vary year to year; gallery Wed–Sat noon–6pm. Subway: A/C/E/7 to 42nd St./Port Authority.

TriBeCa Open Artist Studio Tour FREE TriBeCa certainly doesn't qualify as a rundown neighborhood, so the 100 artist studios that open up for T.O.A.S.T. are a bit of a surprise. You'll also find free music and slideshows amid the tony condos. (The same weekend sees affiliated performances and events from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, in the nearby financial district.) TriBeCa further strives for artistic cred with its Second Wednesdays program. Art galleries stay open until 8pm once a month to let the nabe's weary commodity traders and corporate litigators take in a little nutrition for their souls.

From Canal south to Murray St., and Lafayette west to Washington St. ✆ 212/479-7317. www.toastartwalk.com. Fri 5–9pm; Sat–Mon 1–6pm. Subway: 1 to Franklin St.; A/C/E to Canal St.

FREE Mi Casa Es Su Casa: Open House New York

New Yorkers obsess about real estate. As much time as we kill poring over the property blog Curbed (www.curbed.com), however, there's no substitute for actually poking around someone else's space in person. Every weekend the *Times* provides hundreds of opportunities to impersonate solvent people and waste real estate agents' time by attending apartment sale open houses. Less ethically suspect is the program **Open House New York,** which opens the doors to some of the most mysterious spaces in the city. The first weekend in October brings New Yorkers access to envy-inducing private residences and awe-inspiring public structures. When else are you going to get a peek at Floyd Bennett Field's control tower, MoMA's conservation department, or the grounds of the Roosevelt Island Smallpox Hospital? Locales (almost 200!) are scattered across all five boroughs, so you'll have to come up with a schedule or limit your targets to a few spots. Obviously, intriguing spaces in central locations will have the longest lines. Certain venues limit the number of guests, so for personal must-sees reserve early (✆ **212/991-6470;** www.ohny.org).

Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit FREE This Depression-era idea for helping artists get their work out there is now safely into its eighth decade. Streets near Washington Square Park become a gigantic open-air art gallery, where you can browse through the works of some 200 artists and artisans. The show is juried, so even the crafts have standards to meet. Pick up a free map at the intersection of 8th Street and University.

Show covers University Place btw. 3rd and 12th sts., and spills over to Washington Place btw. Green St. and Washington Sq., and LaGuardia btw. Bleecker and E. 4th sts. ✆ **212/982-6255.** www.washingtonsquareoutdoorartexhibit.org. Noon–6pm Sat–Mon on Memorial Day weekend and Sat–Sun the following weekend; noon–6pm Sat–Mon on Labor Day weekend and Sat–Sun the following weekend. Subway: N/R/W to 8th St.; A/B/C/D/E/V to W. 4th St.

4 Free Tours

SPONSORED TOURS

New York's Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) started off as coalitions of local merchants who were mostly concerned with picking up trash and herding the homeless into neighborhoods without BIDs. Now fully established, BIDs have taken on cultural roles in their communities, sponsoring concerts and public art. Always eager to boost their 'hoods, a few now offer free summer tours, with some continuing throughout the year. Though there's always something new to learn about New York, don't expect to hear many critical words about the neighborhood or its friendly, hardworking BID. (See p. 302 and 308 for tours of Union Sq., Grand Central, and Bryant Park.)

The Alliance for Downtown New York FREE Manhattan's non–Native American history began at the island's tip and the area still holds a wealth of history. The Alliance shows it all off with the Wall Street Walking Tour, every Thursday and Saturday at noon. Wander past icons like the New York Stock Exchange, Trinity Church, and Federal Hall. Tours meet on the steps of the National Museum of the American Indian at 1 Bowling Green. Tours last about 1½ hours; reservations not required.

✆ **212/606-4064.** www.downtownny.com. Thurs and Sat noon, rain or shine. 4/5 to Bowling Green; 1 to South Ferry.

8th Street Walking Tour FREE Eighth Street, and its East Village equivalent St. Marks Place, are among the city's most colorful commercial strips. Get the inside dirt on the area courtesy of raconteur Arthur Marks and the Village Alliance. Tours meet on the northwest corner of Second Avenue and St. Marks.

✆ **212/777-2173.** www.villagealliance.org. Select Sat 11:30am, mid-May to mid-Oct. N/R/W to 8th St.; 6 to Astor Place.

Lincoln Square FREE Lincoln Square is on the cusp of major changes, with new buildings going up left and right and an overhaul of Lincoln Center in the offing. Learn more about the area and its overlooked history courtesy of the pros at Big Onion Walking Tours, who conduct these BID-sponsored bi-monthly rambles.

✆ **212/581-3774.** www.lincolnbid.org. 1st and 3rd Sun 2pm, May–Oct. Subway: A/B/C/D/1 to 59th St./Columbus Circle.

Orchard Street Bargain District Tour FREE The Lower East Side is a bottomless well of history and lore. The neighborhood's current incarnation is marked by a revival of its commercial fortunes, which you will see in detail on this tour. Learn about stores old-fashioned and ultramodern as you wander the narrow streets between the tenements. Reservations not required.

Meet up with the guide in front of Katz's Delicatessen, 205 E. Houston St., at Ludlow St. ✆ 866/224-0206 or 212/226-9010. www.lowereastsideny.com. Apr–Dec daily 11am, rain or shine. Subway: F/V to Second Ave.

Penn Station Tour FREE New Yorkers still lament the murder of the classic McKim, Mead, & White's original Penn Station. Tours of the new include many references to the old. The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station tours happen on the fourth Monday of each month from 12:30 to 2pm. Meet up in the rotunda of the main station, near the tourist information booth (Seventh Ave., btw. 32nd and 33rd sts.).

✆ 212/719-3434. www.34thstreet.org. Subway: A/C/E or 1/2/3 to 34th St.–Penn Station, or B/D/F/V to 34th St.–Harold Sq.

INDEPENDENT TOURS

Battery Park City FREE Battery Park is justifiably proud of its beautiful landscaped grounds. With the parks restored to pre-9/11 showroom condition, the area is eager to show itself off. On select Mondays from 12:30 to 1:30pm you can get a 1-hour tour from a real live horticulturalist. Locations and times vary, so check online. On select weekend days you can take a public art tour, surveying the mixed bag of public installations down here.

✆ 212/267-9700. www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1 to Rector St.; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

Big Apple Greeter FREE These New York boosters roll out the red carpet in an attempt to make their own enthusiasm for the city infectious. Visitors to our city can pick any neighborhood they like, and the greeters will find a knowledgeable volunteer to tour them around for 2 to 4 hours. FINE PRINT Reservations should be made 3 or 4 weeks ahead of time.

✆ 212/669-8159. www.bigapplegreeter.org.

Brooklyn Brewery FREE More of a lecture than a tour, this popular Saturday event entails a visit to a room full of silver beer vats followed by a trip to the company store. Although the complimentary drink tokens have gone the way of Prohibition, there are tempting discounts

when you buy your pints in bulk. Tours run on the hour between 1 and 4pm. Doors open at noon and close at 6pm.

79 N. 11th St., btw. Wyeth and Levit sts. ✆ 718/486-7422. www.brooklynbrewery.com. **Subway: L to Bedford Ave.**

Central Park Conservancy Walking Tours FREE Central Park's rich history and hidden nuggets are explored in these 60- to 90-minute walks. Themes range from landscaping to Revolutionary War sites to the rugged Ramble. Check the website because times, dates, and locations vary. The tours run frequently, year round, in most any weather. Look out for the Conservatory Garden tours, which take you through Manhattan's most beautiful garden.

✆ 212/360-2726. www.centralparknyc.org.

City Hall FREE When City Hall was finished in 1812, the builders didn't bother with marble and granite in the back, thinking cheaper sandstone would be good enough for a side that would forever face a bunch of hills and trees. Though the city expanded, this small-scale building still houses offices of the mayor and city council. The under-publicized guided tour here takes you through a graceful rotunda and up to the Governor's Room, which has a priceless collection of portraits as well as a desk that was used by George Washington.

Broadway at Murray St. ✆ 212/788-2170. www.nyc.gov/html/artcom/html/tours/tours.shtml. **Reserve in advance for tours Thurs 10am (group tours are available Mon, Wed, and Fri at 10am). Without reservations, Wed at noon, sign in at the Heritage Tourism Center on the east side of Broadway at Barclay St. (tour limited to 20 people). Subway: R/W to City Hall; 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall; J/M/Z to Chambers St.; 2/3 to Park Place.**

Destination: El Barrio FREE East Harlem is always prime for some demystification, at least for most New Yorkers. This tour covers the vibrant streets that surround El Museo del Barrio, which co-sponsors with the local tourism board. The walks are free, but advance registration via e-mail is recommended (elbarriotours@elmuseo.org). Meet at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and 104th Street, and walks run from 3 to 5pm, usually between mid-April and October.

1230 Fifth Ave., at 104th St. ✆ 212/831-7272. www.elmuseo.org. **Subway: 6 to 103rd St.**

Evergreens Cemetery Tour FREE This boneyard on the Brooklyn/Queens border seems to stretch forever. As the final resting place for over half a million people, it's a good thing there's ample space

(225 acres to be exact). Lovely rolling hills and vegetation galore make a lush contrast to the city. Guided walking tours of this historic site are held on select Saturdays at 11am. Call or check online for a schedule.

1629 Bushwick Ave., at Conway St., Brooklyn. ✆ **718/455-5300.** www.theevergreenscemetery.com. Tours assemble at the main entrance, Bushwick Ave. and Conway St. Subway: A/C/J/L/Z to Broadway Junction.

Hudson River Park FREE Friends of Hudson River Park put on these waterfront walking tours, which highlight the area's rich history, from Lenape locals to the landfill construction of the Gansevoort Peninsula to the role the piers played in the *Titanic* tragedy. Tours go once a month on Saturday, starting at 3pm and lasting 1 hour. Call ahead for reservations; meet at the info booth at the foot of Pier 45.

Pier 45, Christopher St. at the Hudson. ✆ **212/757-0981.** www.fohrp.org. Subway: 1 to Christopher St.; A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St./Washington Sq.

Prospect Park Discover Nature Tours FREE My favorite tour here leads into the wilds of Brooklyn, where you can see a newly rehabbed ravine, waterfalls, and Brooklyn's last forest. It's just like the Adirondacks—only with less driving, and better proximity to ethnic food when it's over. Tours run on the weekends and Monday holidays at 3pm, March through November. Check the website for other destinations, like nearby Green-Wood Cemetery. Meet at the Audubon Center (at the Boathouse), just inside the Lincoln Road/Ocean Avenue entrance.

✆ **718/287-3400.** www.prospectpark.org. Subway: B/Q/S to Prospect Park.

"Forgotten . . . " Tours

With so many free tours around, it seems silly to put down money, but Kevin Walsh of **Forgotten New York** (**www.forgotten-ny.com**) is worth every penny. From a website semi-obsessively dedicated to vanishing elements of the city, like Bishop's Crook streetlamps and slate sidewalks, come these tours of obscure haunts. See things like a 17th-century Queens cemetery in the shadow of a LIRR trestle, or the Bay Ridge church that once counted Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson as members of its congregation. Tours tend to run in the warmer months and cost $5; check the website for a schedule.

Science Barge FREE If you're interested in glimpsing how humans are going to live in the coming years (barring us catching some major break soon), the Science Barge might be a good place to start. Although this floating urban farm prototype—think of it as Manhattan's answer to Biosphere, built on a Manhattan-apartment scale—does most of its outreach with school groups, adults can get informed during free 45-minute tours. The tours run in the warmer months, Tuesday through Friday at 4pm and at noon, 1, 3, and 4pm on the weekends. FINE PRINT Tours are cancelled in case of rain.

Pier 84, at 44th St. and the Hudson. ✆ **212/757-7560.** www.nysunworks.org. Subway: A/C/E/7 to 42nd St./Port Authority.

Shorewalkers Shorewalkers sure know how to hoof it. This environmental walking group makes some huge treks around the city, usually keeping close to water. FINE PRINT A $3 donation is requested. Dates, times, and locations vary; call or check the website for specifics.

✆ **212/330-7686.** www.shorewalkers.org.

Surveillance Camera Outdoor Walking Tours FREE Thousands of security cameras track New Yorkers' every move. The Surveillance Camera Players run periodic tours to make citizens a little more aware of this virtual police state, which has proliferated in dramatic fashion over the last couple of years. Free tours meet at varying spots around the city (usually at 2pm), with no reservations necessary.

✆ **212/561-0106.** www.notbored.org/scowt.html.

Take a Walk, New York! FREE The Listen to your Heart Campaign endeavors to slow the widening of New York waists through a series of guided urban walks. The walks are scheduled for weekends in all five boroughs and last 2 to 3 hours. Go fight the good fight against cardiovascular disease! Check online for current schedules.

✆ **212/228-3126.** www.walkny.org.

Tweed Courthouse FREE Boss Tweed used this eponymous structure to fleece the city for millions (Tammany cohort Andrew Garvey, the "prince of plasterers," made a cool $133,187 for just 2 days' work). Recently renovated, the building is a fascinating melding of architectural styles, with elaborate arches and brickwork. An octagonal skylight lets the sun pour in on the endless conferences conducted by the current tenant, the Board of Ed.

52 Chambers St., btw. Centre St. and Broadway. ✆ **212/788-2170.** www.nyc.gov/html/artcom/html/tours/tours.shtml. Reserve in advance for tours Fri 2pm (group tours Tues at 10am). Subway: R/W to City Hall; 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall; J/M/Z to Chambers St.; 2/3 to Park Place.

Urban Trail Conference FREE A diverse selection of sites, from downtown Manhattan to the PepsiCo sculpture gardens in Purchase, New York, are toured by these intrepid trekkers. They ask for a $3 donation from nonmembers (a few events cost a little more), although first-timers get to walk for free. Big spenders can shell out for a year's worth of activity by paying the club's $10 annual dues.

Phone numbers vary by tour guide. www.urbantrail.org.

5 Green Peace: Gardens

It's just not healthy for humans to go too long without a break from the concrete jungle. New York has some great parks, but the space tends to be pretty cultivated. Our community gardens are nice, too, but they're small and usually don't let the public in for more than a couple of hours a week. Botanical gardens are the best way to inhale fresh country air, and they're closer than you might think. Time your visit right, and they're also completely free.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden Fifty-two acres of cherry trees, roses, formal gardens, and ponds in the heart of Brooklyn is nothing short of a miracle. This is the city's most popular botanic garden and it's spectacular almost year-round. May is particularly worth noting, with bright green leaves on the trees and the cherry blossoms rioting. Don't miss the Fragrance Garden, designed for the blind, and the world's oldest and largest collection of bonsai. Free tours run on the weekends at 1pm with no reservations necessary. The regular admission is $8, but Tuesdays are free, as are Saturday mornings from 10am to noon. In winter, you can add Tuesday through Friday to the free list (mid-Nov to late Feb).

1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn. ✆ **718/623-7200.** www.bbg.org. Tues–Fri 8am–6pm; Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; closes at 4:30pm Nov–Feb. Open Mon holiday, except Labor Day. Subway: 2/3 to Eastern Pkwy./Brooklyn Museum; B/Q to Prospect Park; S to Botanic Garden.

New York Botanical Garden Visions of the Bronx don't conjure up uncut forests, rhododendron valleys, waterfalls, ponds, and wetlands. As unlikely as it may seem, though, for over a century the

FREE Clang, Clang, Clang

When it comes to hyping NYC's attractions, the Bronx and Brooklyn can understandably feel shorted by Manhattan. That's why God created **cultural trolleys.**

For a loop around Prospect Park, look no further than the **Heart of Brooklyn Trolley** (✆ **718/638-7700;** www.heartofbrooklyn.org). On weekends and holidays from noon to 6pm, the trolley will get you from the Brooklyn Museum all the way south around Prospect Lake, and back up again. The Bronx has no trolley envy, offering three ways for visitors to get around Jonas Bronck's old stamping grounds.

On the first Wednesday night of every month (except Jan and Sept), the **Bronx Culture Trolley** (✆ **718/931-9500,** ext. 33; www.bronxarts.org) whisks visitors around to free art, music, theater, and poetry readings. Free wine and snacks are even offered at the starting point, the Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse, at 149th Street. Advance reservations are recommended.

On the first Friday night of every month, City Island shows itself off with its **Bronx Seaside Trolley Program** (✆ **718/885-3090;** www.cityislandchamber.org), which connects the 6 train at Pelham Bay Park with local galleries, shops, and the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum.

The **Bronx Tour Trolley** (✆ **718/590-3518;** www.ilovethebronx.com) zips around New York's other Little Italy (where the food is 100 times better) on Arthur Avenue, the Bronx Zoo, and the botanical garden, with mass transit–friendly stops along the way. The trolley runs during the days on the weekends and holidays from April through October. All of these outer borough trolley rides are free—take that, Manhattan.

Bronx has been home to one of America's premier public gardens. With over 250 acres of rolling hills and landscaped gardens, if it's flora you can probably find it. Admission to the grounds is $6 ($13 gets you the run of everything), but all day Wednesday and Saturday morning from 10am to noon you can get into the grounds for free.

200th St. and Southern Blvd., the Bronx. ✆ **718/817-8700.** www.nybg.org. Tues–Sun and Mon holidays 10am–6pm. Metro North (✆ 800/METRO-INFO [638-7646] or 212/532-4900; www.mta.nyc.ny.us/mnr) runs from Grand Central Terminal to the New York Botanical Garden station; it's a 20-min ride. Subway: B/D/4 to Bedford Park, walk southeast on Bedford Park Blvd. 8 blocks.

Queens Botanical Garden FREE This little-known park is an oasis in the heart of busy Flushing. Formal gardens are joined by a rose garden, a bee garden, a Victorian garden, and a 21-acre arboretum. A gorgeous new visitor center, complete with environmentally friendly technology, opened in 2007. Spring is the natural time to visit—the entire garden is awash with color.

43-50 Main St., at Dahlia St., Flushing, Queens. ✆ **718/886-3800.** www.queensbotanical.org. Nov–Mar Tues–Sun 8am–4:30pm; Apr–Oct Tues–Fri 8am–6pm, Sat–Sun 8am–7pm. Subway: 7 to Main St. Flushing.

Staten Island Botanical Gardens FREE Staten Islanders have gardens galore nestled inside the Snug Harbor Cultural Center. The

FREE Parking It

Parks are among the city's best freebies, and we're fortunate to be in an era of expansion. Some 550 acres (!) of new parkland have opened up along the **piers near Chelsea.** The city did a gorgeous job with these urban beaches, including planting some actual slender-leaved vegetation called "grass." Across town, restoration continues on the **East River Park.** When it's finally completed, epic Brooklyn views will complement benches, ball fields, and a wide jogging path. Everyone knows about the great Manhattan views from the **Brooklyn Promenade,** but Queens has an equally impressive skyline vantage that many New Yorkers have never seen. The **Gantry Plaza State Park** in Long Island City is fitted out with long piers that jut out over the East River, with the U.N. and Empire State Building standing tall among Midtown's architectural jumble. The park has been newly fixed up and expanded on its northern end, with a swath of grass and comfy seats for chilling out. 49th St. and East River Dr., Queens. ✆ **718/786-6385.** Subway: 7 to Vernon Jackson, walk west to the river.

center is 2 miles from the ferry terminal, so getting here is a bit of a haul from the other boroughs. The grounds are open daily from dawn to dusk. They're free, but a couple of the gardens inside have fees ranging from $2 to $5. Connie Gretz's Secret Garden is well worth its $2 charge—it has a maze and a castle with a moat. They'll even waive the $2 if you've got a child in tow.

1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island. ✆ **718/273-8200.** www.sibg.org. Daily dawn–dusk. S40 bus from the ferry to Snug Harbor.

Wave Hill Some of the city's most gorgeous acreage can be found in Riverdale, in the Bronx, where Wave Hill's breathtaking views take in the panorama of the Hudson and the Palisades. Thousands of plant species are spread across the 28 acres here, originally the grounds of a private estate. The plant curious can educate themselves in the carefully labeled herb and flower gardens. Horticultural, environmental, and forestry programs provide further edification. Regular admission is $6, but the grounds are free on Tuesdays and Saturday mornings from 9am to noon.

675 W. 252nd St., at Independence Ave., the Bronx. ✆ **718/549-3200.** www.wavehill.org. Mid-Apr to mid-Oct Tues–Sun 9am–5:30pm; Mid-Oct to mid-Apr closes at 4:30. Subway: 1 to 231st St., then take the Bx7 or Bx10 bus to the 252nd St. stop; or A to 207th St. and pick up the Bx7 to 252nd St. From the 252nd St. stop, walk west across the parkway bridge and turn left; at 249th St., turn right.

FREE Close Encounters

One of Manhattan's leafiest oases lies in Chelsea, on the campus of the **General Theological Seminary.** The Close, the campus's grounds, are a tranquil patch in the middle of an already-quaint stretch of 1850s rowhouses. The Seminary's buildings date to the late 19th century, constructed in the English collegiate-Gothic style. Wander the wisteria-choked grounds and you may feel like you've stepped through a wormhole straight onto the campus of a British university. Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg used to stroll here; Kerouac lived across the street in 1951, where he typed his third draft of *On the Road.* Chelsea Square, during construction enter at 440 W. 21st St., btw. Ninth and Tenth aves. (press the buzzer and register to your left, leaving ID). ✆ **212/243-5150.** www.gts.edu. Mon–Sat 10am–3pm; shorter hours when school is out of session; closed for rain and during exam and commencement periods. C/E to 23rd Street.

Metro North (✆ 212/532-4900) travel from Grand Central to the Riverdale station; from there, it's a pleasant 5-block walk to Wave Hill.

Winter Garden at the World Financial Center FREE This is the best spot in the city to get some perspective on Ground Zero. The Winter Garden was all but totaled by the collapsing towers on 9/11, but you'd never guess it to look at the towering *Washingtonia robusta* palm trees and gleaming marble inside the atrium. Walk up the stairs to the panoramic windows and you'll have an elevated view of the former World Trade Center site, which is quickly being transformed into yet another corporate skyscraper.

Between Vesey and Liberty sts., btw. the West Side Hwy. and the Hudson. ✆ **212/945-2600.** www.worldfinancialcenter.com. Open 24 hr. A/C/J/M/Z/2/3/4/5 to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau; E to World Trade Center; R/W to City Hall; 1 to Rector St.

6 Zoo York

New York has plenty of fauna to go with its flora, though it isn't always cheap to check out. The minizoos in the major Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan parks charge $8 admission and the Bronx Zoo asks for $14. Fortunately, there are alternatives. The Bronx has a pay-what-you-wish policy 1 day a week, and the city's parks are rich with other opportunities for getting close to critters.

Bronx Zoo Wildlife Conservation Park Yankee Stadium isn't the only place in the Bronx where you can find 4,000 wild animals running around in their natural habitat. The Bronx Zoo is the largest city zoo in the country, and one of New York's greatest assets. Gibbons, snow leopards, red pandas, Western lowland gorillas, okapi, and red river hogs are just a few of the famous residents. With 265 acres to explore, it's easy to wander away a full day here. For summer visits, try to get here early or late, as the midday heat often finds the animals sleepy in their enclosures. Admission is $14, but Wednesdays are on a contribution basis (the suggested admission is the full price, but it's pay what you wish). Additional charges ($3 or so) will apply for some exhibits.

185th St. and Southern Blvd. ✆ **718/367-1010.** www.bronxzoo.com. Nov–Mar daily 10am–4:30pm (extended hours for Holiday Lights late Nov to early Jan); Apr–Oct Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat–Sun 10am–5:30pm. Subway: 2 to Pelham Pkwy., Metro North to Fordham Rd. (then Bx9 bus); BxM11 Liberty Line bus (✆ 212/652-8400).

FREE A Midnight Elephant Walk

When the pachyderms visit the big town, they're coming off their Nassau Coliseum stand. Their train only gets them as far as the Long Island City yards. They can't exactly get a lift to the gig from a towncar, so they have to hoof it, through the Queens-Midtown Tunnel and down the streets of Manhattan. Watching the elephants emerge from the tunnel is an amazing spectacle. They walk in a file of trunks holding tails, with clown escorts all around. Often other hoofed beasts like zebras and camels come along for the stroll. The walk goes all the way to the elephants' five-story ramp at Madison Square Garden, but the best scene is at the tunnel entrance on 34th Street. The crowd is fun-loving, with the freaks that events in Manhattan invariably bring out well-represented. The procession hits the Manhattan side of the tunnel around midnight. Whether you come for the spectacle or just to hiss the exploitation of animals, be sure to be on time because the whole thing goes surprisingly quickly. The elephant walk takes place at the beginning of the circus' annual stand (usually late Mar); check the weekly update on the website for the exact date and time. ✆ **212/465-6741.** www.ringling.com. Subway: 6 to 33rd. St.; A/C/E or 1/2/3 to 34th St.

FREE BIRDS

A dearth of rest stops on the Eastern Seaboard makes New York parks essential for avian travelers. Three New York parks loan out equipment for better boning up on our most welcome tourists.

Battery Park City FREE Eighty different bird species pass through the lush tip of Manhattan. At the Wagner Park pavilions binoculars and field guides are loaned out for free on select Thursdays (usually 9:30–11am) and Saturdays (usually 11am–1pm); check online as times vary.

✆ **212/267-9700.** www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1 to Rector St.; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

Central Park FREE Birdsong fills the thickets of the Ramble, an unexpectedly rural stretch of the park. You can take a closer look at the warbling set with a kit available from the Belvedere Castle. The kit

FREE What Up, Dog?

Being trapped in small, dark apartments is just as hard on dogs as it is on us. Fortunately for dogs, they have a release valve in the form of dog runs. The human and canine interactions make great free public theater. The **Tompkins Square** dog run is my favorite. Both the four-legged and two-legged regulars have a ton of character, and their friendships and rivalries are fascinating to observe. Don't miss the creative costumes of the **Dog Run Halloween Parade,** held at noon on the Sunday before Halloween. Tompkins Sq. Park, btw. 7th and 10th sts. and aves. A and B. ✆ **917/797-7073.** www.dogster.org. Subway: 6 to Astor Place; F/V to Second Ave.

is a backpack with binoculars, reference materials, and a map. The Castle is open Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 4:30pm. Two pieces of ID are required.

Midpark at 79th St. ✆ **212/772-0210.** www.centralparknyc.org. Subway: B/C to 81st St.

Falconry Extravaganza FREE The falcon has landed: One day a year the birds of prey uncloak in Central Park. All manner of raptors swoop through the air above the East Meadow under the close supervision of the Urban Park Rangers. Meet at the East Meadow on the east side of the park at 97th Street. Leave the Chihuahuas at home.

✆ **212/628-2345.** www.nycgovparks.org. One Sat in Oct noon–4pm. Subway: 6 to 96th St.

Prospect Park FREE During spring's annual northward migration, hundreds of different bird species pass through here. To get some expert assistance in figuring out what's what, hook up with an introductory bird-watching tour (Sat noon–1:30pm.) To catch the worm-getting birds, you'll have to get up earlier. On the first Sunday of every month, join the Early Bird Walk as it ambles through the park from 8 to 10am. It's free, but you should call in advance to register. All tours leave from the boathouse, just inside the Lincoln Road/Ocean Avenue entrance.

✆ **718/287-3400.** www.prospectpark.org. Subway: B/Q/S to Prospect Park.

GO FISH

It's a fine line between standing along the shore like an idiot with a stick in your hands and going fishing, but kids love baiting up and casting in anyway. The city offers a few spots for gathering fodder for "the one that got away" tales.

Battery Park City FREE Drop a line in the Hudson and see if you can pull up any three-eyed specimens. (Actually, the river's been mending remarkably in recent years, thanks to antipollution measures.) Bait and equipment are loaned out in Wagner Park. Sessions run from 10am to 2pm on select Saturdays.

✆ **212/267-9700.** www.bpcparks.org. Subway: 1 to Rector St.; 4/5 to Bowling Green.

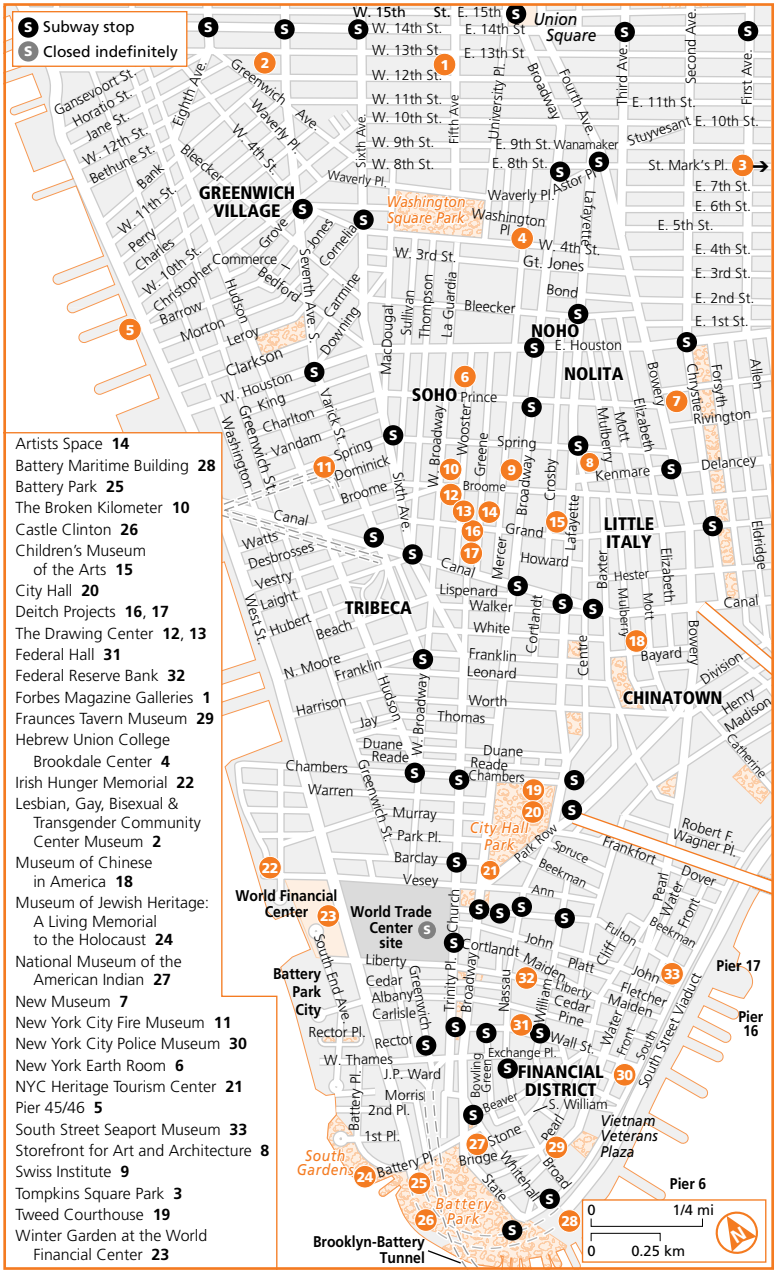
Central Park FREE Like the good New Yorkers they are, some 50,000 fish pack uncomplainingly into the confines of the Harlem Meer. You can try your hand at catching a bass, catfish, or bluegill with equipment loaned by the Charles A. Dana Discovery Center. Bait, pole, and instructions are provided. Fish can be fondled, but they're not to be kept: It's catch and release. Open Tuesday to Sunday 10am to 4pm (last pole goes out at 3pm), mid-April to mid-October. Valid photo ID is required.

Inside Central Park at 110th St., btw. Fifth and Lenox aves. ✆ **212/860-1370.** www.centralparknyc.org. Subway: 2/3 to Central Park North.

Hudson River Park FREE There's no dilemma whether to fish or cut bait here, as the Big City Fishing program takes care of the latter for you. Experienced anglers are on hand to offer advice, and the rods are free to borrow. Reel fun can be found at piers 46 (Greenwich Village) and 84 (Midtown West). Don't get too attached to your oyster toadfishes, flukes, or cunners, however, because everything is catch and release. Available 10:30am to 5pm on summer weekends, with weekday hours in July and August.

Pier 46, the Hudson just north of Christopher St. ✆ **212/627-2020.** www.hudsonriverpark.org. Subway: 1 to Christopher St. *Pier 84*, the Hudson at W. 44th St. Subway: A/C/E/7 to 42nd St./Port Authority.

EXPLORING DOWNTOWN



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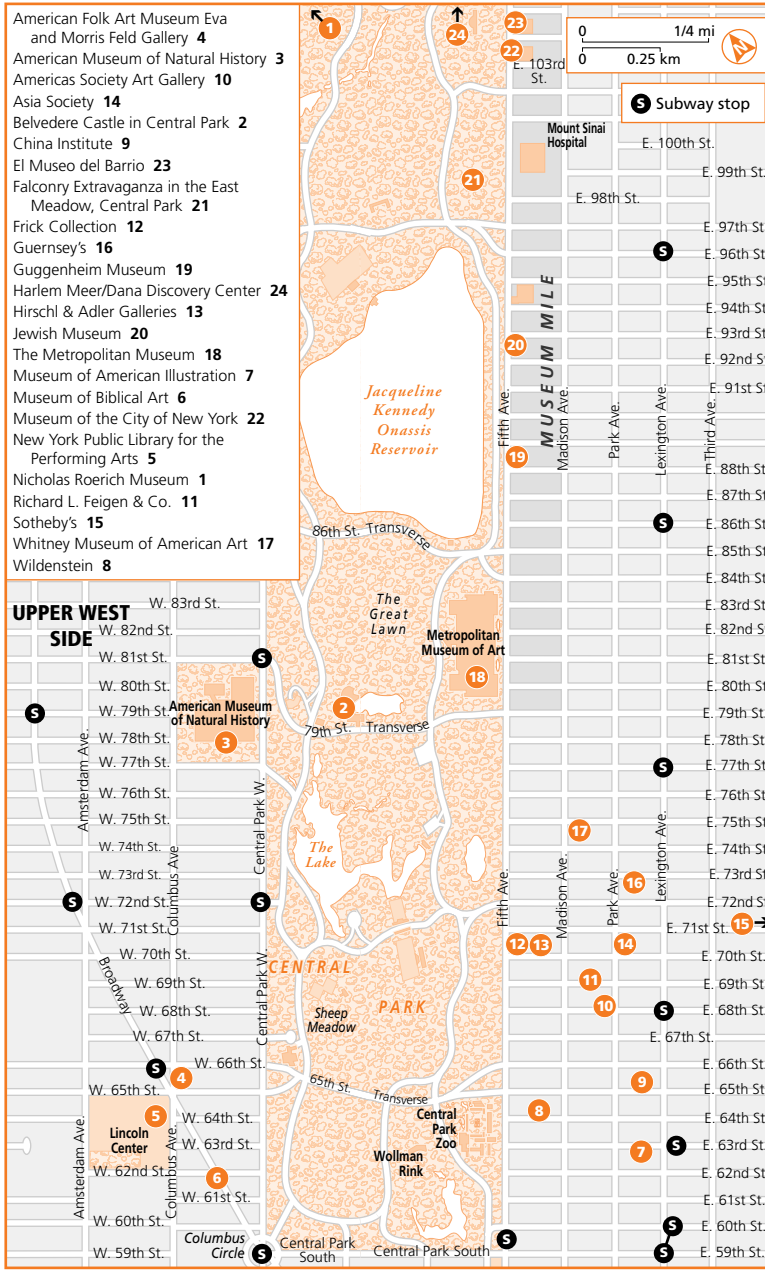
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Richard L. Feigen & Co. 11
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Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir
86th St. Transverse
The Great Lawn
Metropolitan Museum of Art
79th St. Transverse
The Lake
CENTRAL PARK
Sheep Meadow
65th St. Transverse
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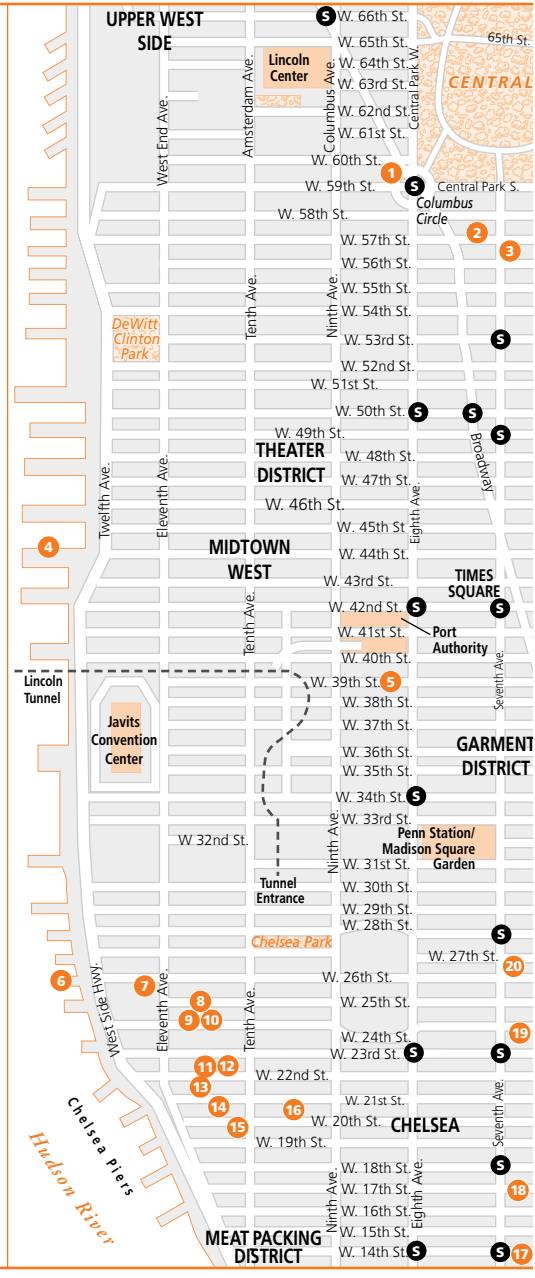

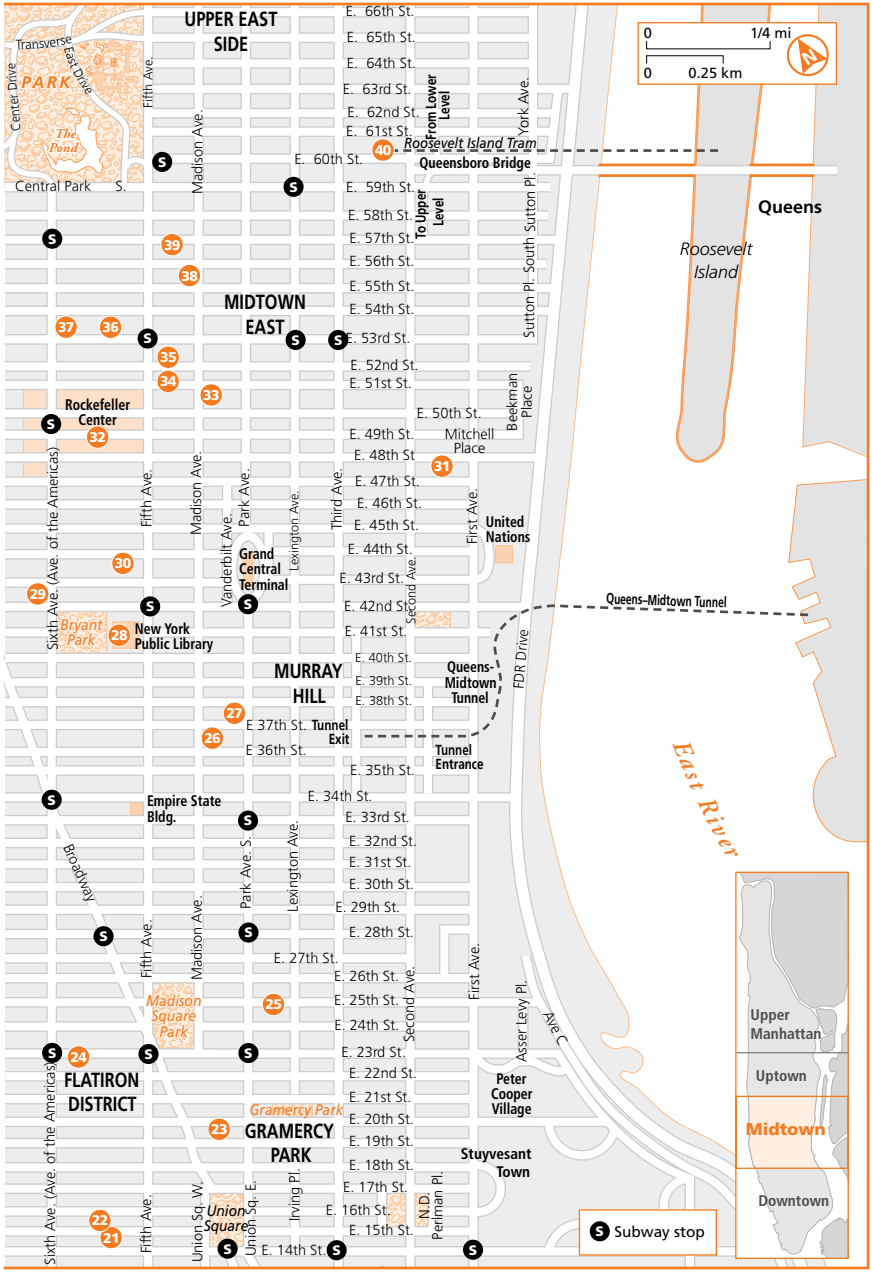
UPPER EAST SIDE
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MURRAY HILL
FLATIRON DISTRICT
GRAMERCY PARK
Transverse
East Drive
Center Drive
PARK
The Pond
Central Park S.
Fifth Ave.
Madison Ave.
Park Ave.
Lexington Ave.
Third Ave.
Second Ave.
First Ave.
Vanderbilt Ave.
Sixth Ave. (Ave. of the Americas)
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Queens-Midtown Tunnel
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Peter Cooper Village
Stuyvesant Town
N.D. Perlman Pl.
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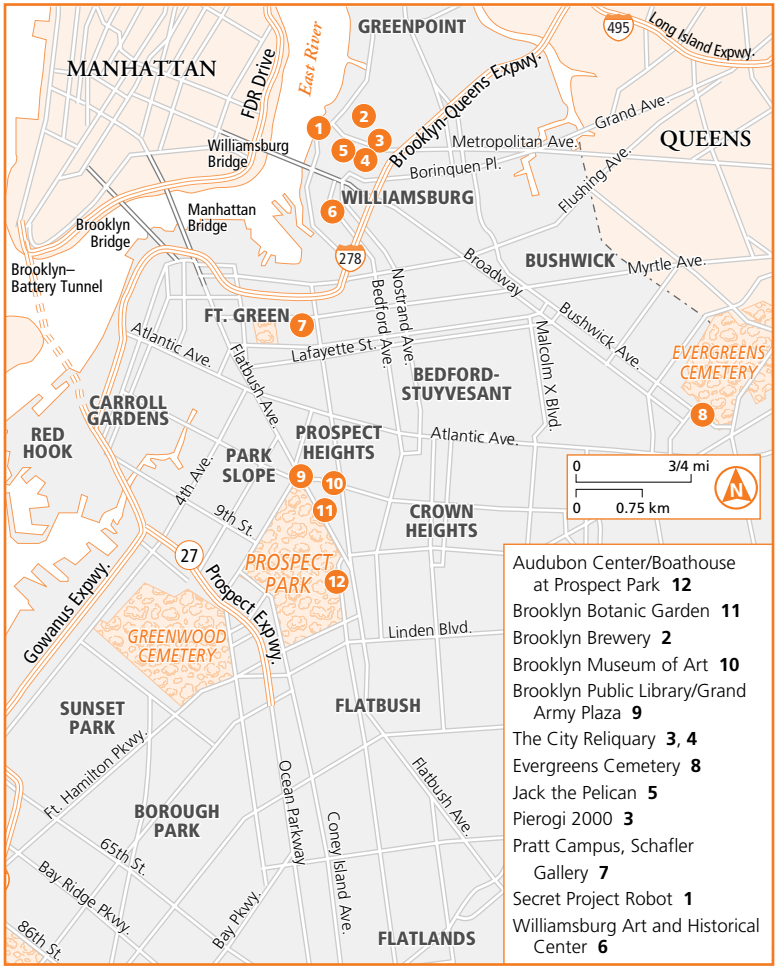
EXPLORING BROOKLYN



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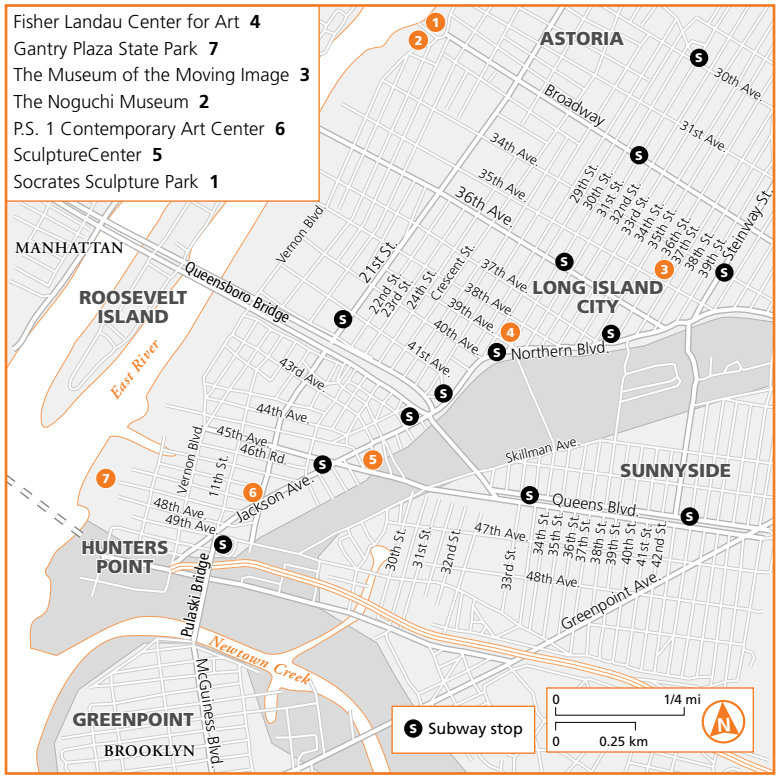
- Williamsburg Art and Historical Center **6**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Queensboro Bridge
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East River
Newtown Creek
Broadway
Northern Blvd.
Queens Blvd.
Skillman Ave.
Jackson Ave.
Greenpoint Ave.
McGuinness Blvd.
Vernon Blvd.
21st St.
Crescent St.
11th St.
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Coney Island is getting a modern overhaul, but the iconic Wonder Wheel will remain, as will the Cyclone roller coaster. *See p. 293 for a full itinerary.*

7 FREE & DIRT CHEAP DAYS

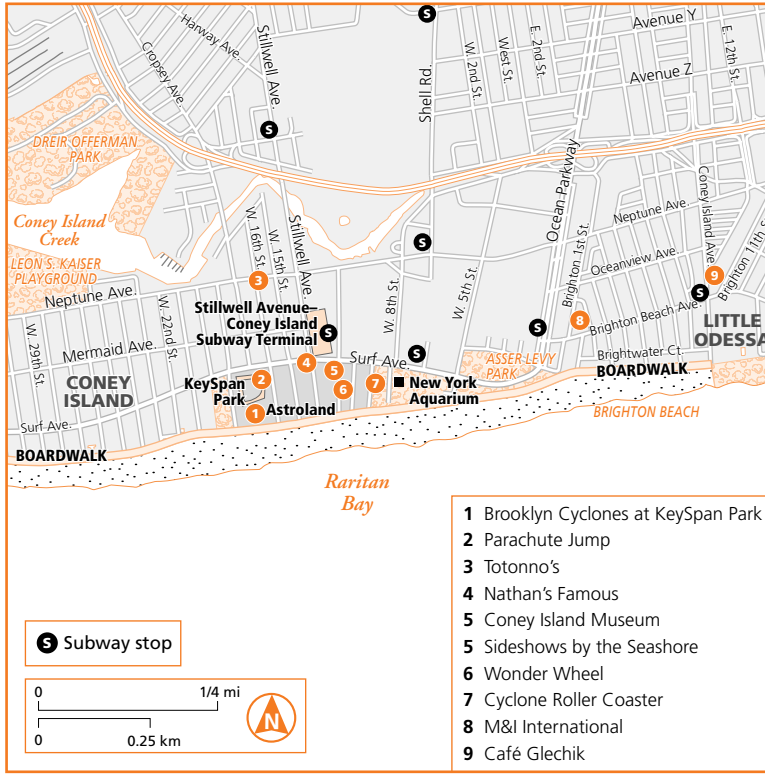
Though New York is happy to gouge visitors for $40 bus tours and boat cruises, a person can scope out a lot of city for no money at all. It's hard to swing a cat in NYC without banging into a free daylong adventure or cheap date. The city's close quarters means you can hit a huge range of sites without putting excessive mileage on your soles. You don't even need to pack—Gotham's corner stores are already storing your provisions for you.

Itinerary 1: Coney Island, Baby

Where	Coney Island, Brooklyn.
How to Get There	D/F/N/Q to Stillwell Avenue/Coney Island. The subway ride is about 40 minutes from downtown Manhattan. You can also use the B/Q at Brighton Beach.
How Long to Spend There	It's easy to amuse yourself along the boardwalk and environs for 2 or 3 hours. Anything longer probably requires a beach towel and a page-turner.
What to Bring	If you're planning on a dip, a bathing suit and towel are the obvious needs. There are public bathrooms, cabanas for changing, and showers for shedding saltwater. Even if you're going to keep to the streets, bring sunscreen because there's light aplenty reflecting off the sand and sea.
Best Times to Go	Morning's calm is nice. Midday summer days can be brutal and hectic. Late afternoons the crowds start to disperse and the light is lovely.
Related Tip	The big holiday weekends bring in special events, but they also bring the biggest crowds. If you're not in the mood for the crush, go on a weekday, or keep to the fringes, which are less populated. In the non-summer months the amusement parks are closed and the boardwalk is almost empty, but the experience can be peaceful and replenishing.

After a few weeks or months of city living, trapped in the concrete canyons, it's easy to forget that New York City grew so far and fast because of its access to water. New York Harbor stays close to the public consciousness, but too many of us overlook the Atlantic Ocean, which is just a subway ride away. When you feel like traveling to a distant place but don't want to invest more than a couple of Metrocard swipes, Coney Island is hard to beat. In summer the area becomes a blue-collar resort, with salsa bands and volleyball games and screaming kids on the rides. As with all of Brooklyn, it's the furthest thing from monolithic. Tourists, hipsters, and elderly immigrant residents all intermingle on the beachfront benches. Yes, there's a looming $1-billion makeover to go with the new $250-million subway terminal, but even the inevitable gentrification won't prevent Coney from remaining the boroughs' greatest getaway.

ITINERARY 1: CONEY ISLAND, BABY



1 The Beach

The Atlantic up close is irresistible and the broad beaches here are a good spot to start a tour. Get good and hot in the sun and then go in for a dip. The water is not the cleanest, but just follow the lead of the other souls out there bobbing in the waves. On a hot day it's particularly refreshing. A few blocks to the east of Astroland and the subway station, the bodies thin out quickly and you can find wide-open stretches. If you're unwilling to track sand back in your shoes, a stroll along the boardwalk offers endless people-watching entertainment.

2 Mealtime

The options for cheap beach food in Coney Island are almost limitless. Fried clams, fried dough, french fries, and soft-serve ice cream are among the highlights.

- On July 4th at high noon, hefty Americans and rail-thin Japanese fight it out in the annual Coney Island Hot Dog eating contest. For $2.95 a pop you

Coney Island Costs

Free	
Sun, sand, and sea	$0
Dirt Cheap	
A day at the beach + 1 museum	$1
Add-Ons for Spendthrift Millionaires	
Cyclone Roller Coaster or Wonder Wheel	$6-$8
+ Half a pizza	$9
+ Sideshow	$7.50

can hold your own minicontest at Nathan's Famous, which still sells some million dogs a year at their busy stand.

- As good as a meal on a picnic table just off the beach is, it's worth noting that one of New York's best pizzas is just a few blocks away. Totonno's is a casual, family-run operation that serves up top pies (no slices). The fresh mozzarella, tangy sauce, and delicious thin crust haven't lost a step through 80 years of operation. Large pies are about $18.

3 The Legendary Cyclone

The Cyclone Roller Coaster is the granddaddy of Coney Island amusements. Accelerating heart rates since 1927, it's the oldest and most-imitated roller coaster in the world. It's also a quota-starved insurance underwriter's nightmare, with engineering limited to a pulling chain and gravity, but still managing to get those rickety cars up to 60 mph. The supporting rails and wooden boards look mighty untrustworthy, but of course that's the thrill (and in truth, the safety record here is excellent). Rides are $8 a pop ($5 for a reride) for 1 minute and 50 seconds of action, so it's not exactly dirt cheap, though it's definitely memorable.

4 The Coney Island Museum & Sideshows

The museum charge of 99¢ is just about right for a visit to this musty second-floor space. Funhouse mirrors, vintage bumper cars, and old signage form the bulk of the collection. A handful of small temporary exhibits reflect the love this organization has for Coney Island's vanished heyday. For one penny more you can watch a mutoscope reel of Thomas Edison's 1903 electrocution of Topsy, a Coney Island elephant condemned for the deaths of three trainers.

Just around the corner you'll find **Sideshows by the Seashore,**

The Coney Island Skyline

Parachute jumps were developed as military-training devices, but leave it to America to convert them to fun. Coney Island's parachute jump started out as a ride at the 1939 World's Fair in Queens before packing up for Brooklyn, where it served thrill-seekers until 1964. The skeletal form that remains has an unexpected elegance. A recent design contest was the first step in installing an architecturally ambitious new base, complete with a restaurant and visitor center. The jump has been designated a historic landmark and it's the pride of the local skyline, so much so that it's sometimes called the Eiffel Tower of Brooklyn.

The Eiffel Tower of Paris was the motivator for George Washington Gale Ferris, an engineer who took up the challenge for America to respond to the Frenchies' innovations in steel. The famous wheels still bear his name and Coney Island's version, the 1920s Wonder Wheel, is one of the world's tallest at 150 feet. From the ground it looks like a gentle spin, but as the cars slide on lateral rails they create a somewhat stomach-churning effect. For panoramic views of the city and sea it's worth it. The $6 cost to ride, however, is a matter of individual budgetary discretion.

run by the same people. It's the nation's last 10-in-1 freak show; step right up to see illustrated men and women, fire-eating, albino-serpent handling, and even beds of nails. The theater is small and run-down, with no air-conditioning, but there's 45 minutes of entertainment for only $7.50 adults, $5 kids 12 and under. If you're patient, you may hear the barker hustle up some empty seats at a discount. Shows run from Easter through the end of September, weekends only except in the heart of summer, when there are Wednesday through Friday shows as well. Weekend and holiday shows are between 1 and 9pm, weekdays 2 to 8pm.

5 Keyspan Stadium

The return of baseball to Brooklyn certainly hasn't diminished local pride, and tickets to Mets farmhands, the **Brooklyn Cyclones,** aren't that easy to

Make a Date

Coney Island after hours is even seedier than the daylight spectacle, but that doesn't impede on the potential for a great cheap date. The sight of the dark swells of the Atlantic and the cleared-out beach is pretty grand. The only thing that could improve on it is free **fireworks,** which come around 9:30pm every Friday night from late June to late August. After the fireworks if you've got money to burn, check out Sideshows by the Seashore's **Burlesque by the Beach.** Troupes from around the city come down to shake various body parts. Campy costumes and fire-eating round out the experience. Friday nights at 10pm; tickets are usually $10. (Look for Thurs night "Bawdville at the Beach" shows as well.)

On Saturday nights, the same Sideshow folk unfold chairs in the Coney Island Museum so they can project campy films (p. 50). Coney Island–themed fare and other B-movie obsessions are the norm, and it's only $5. 1208 Surf Ave., 2nd floor. ✆ **718/372-5159.** www.indiefilmpage.com. Sat 8:30pm.

come by. If the game you're aching to see sells out, keep in mind that some standby seats are made available on game day outside the boardwalk stadium. Seats are pretty cheap, for professional sports, $7 to $16.

6 Bonus Round: Brighton Beach

If you want to leave America but neglected to pack a passport, there is a close-by option. A quick trip east on the boardwalk will put you in the heart of **Little Odessa** in Brighton Beach. Between the strolling Russian émigrés, the Cyrillic signs, and the clunky design on the sidewalk cafes, you'll be forgiven for thinking you've walked into a Black Sea resort town. The cafes are surprisingly pricey, but there's plenty of cheap street fare a block inland. Take a left and walk toward the El, which runs above Brighton Beach Avenue, a bustling street dotted with caviar shops and street vendors.

For total immersion in a foreign land, check out the **M & I International supermarket.** You can stock up for the trip home, or enjoy Russian pastries or smoked fish in the upstairs cafe. Prices are all outer-borough low.

To enjoy a more sit-down experience, join the foodies taking a pilgrimage to **Café Glechik,** a nearby Ukrainian cafe known for its dumplings, served in two supple varieties (*pelmeni,* folded like tortellini, and *vereniki,* which resemble *pierogi*). There are also excellent soups, salads, and kebabs, and most everything comes in well under $10.

Special Events

- In mid-July, the *Village Voice* sponsors the **Siren Music Festival,** a massive rock concert. Some 100,000 indie fans show up to enjoy music on two stages from 1 until 9pm. It's all free, with no tickets necessary; just show up. Main stage: 10th Street at the boardwalk. Second stage: Stillwell Avenue at the boardwalk (✆ **212/475-3333;** www.villagevoice.com/siren).
- With body paint and beads, plus a few strategic scraps of fabric to keep things legal, the avatars of New York's retro-culture scene transform themselves into mermaids and Neptunes at the annual **Mermaid Parade.** Classic cars join the procession as it works its way up Surf Avenue, dispersing when the participants dash down the beach to the ageless Atlantic. First Saturday after the summer solstice. Surf Avenue from West 16th to West 10th streets. www.coneyisland.com/mermaid.shtml. See also June in the "Calendar of Events" (p. 22).

Itinerary 1 Index

Brooklyn Cyclones at Keyspan Park 1904 Surf Ave., along the boardwalk. ✆ 718/449-8497. www.brooklyncyclones.com. Check the website for game schedule.

Café Glechik 3159 Coney Island Ave., btw. Brighton Beach and Oceanview aves. ✆ 718/616-0494. Daily 9am–9pm.

Coney Island Museum 1208 Surf Ave., at W. 12th St. ✆ 718/372-5159. www.coneyisland.com. Sat–Sun noon–5pm, with expanded hours in season.

Cyclone Roller Coaster 1000 Surf Ave., along W. 10th St. ✆ 718/372-0275. www.astroland.com. In season, daily noon–midnight.

Deno's Wonder Wheel W. 12th St. just south of the boardwalk. ✆ 718/372-2592. www.wonderwheel.com. Weekends and school holidays,

Apr–May, Sept–Oct noon–9pm, weather permitting; Memorial Day to Labor Day daily 11am–midnight, weather permitting.

Golden Unicorn 18 E. Broadway, at Catherine St. ✆ **212/941-0911.** www.goldenunicornrestaurant.com. Daily 9am–4pm.

M&I International 249 Brighton Beach Ave., btw. Brighton 1st Road and Brighton 1st Place. ✆ **718/615-1011.** Daily 8am–10pm.

Nathan's Famous 1310 Surf Ave., at Stillwell Ave. ✆ **718/946-2202.** www.nathansfamous.com. Mon–Thurs, Sun 8am–2am; Fri–Sat 8am–3am.

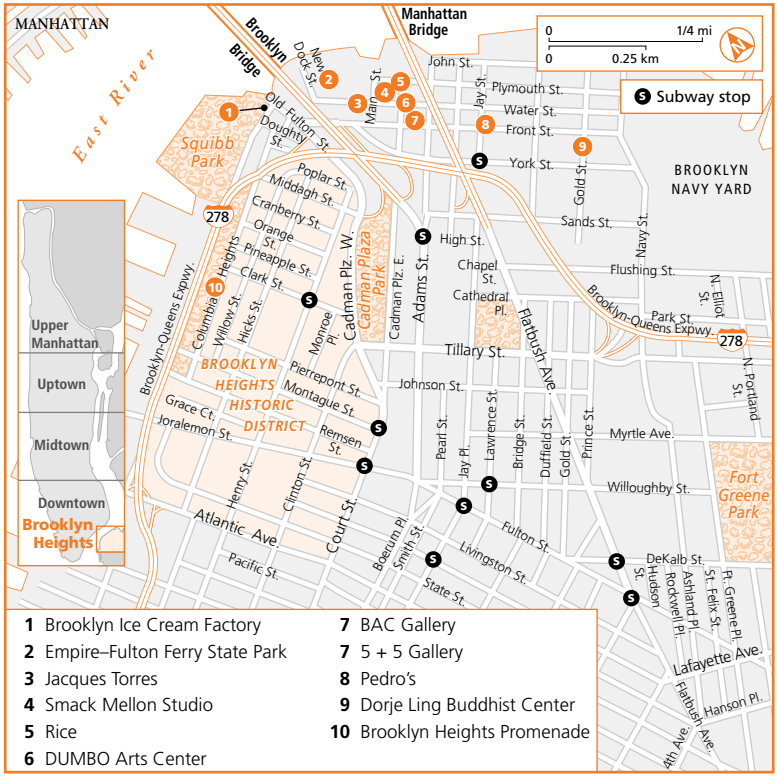
Sideshows by the Seashore Surf Ave., at W. 12th St. ✆ **212/372-5159.** www.coneyisland.com. Weekend and holiday shows are between 1 and 9pm, weekdays in season 2 to 8pm. All showtimes depend on weather and crowd size.

Totonno's 1524 Neptune Ave., btw. 15th and 16th sts. ✆ **718/372-8606.** Wed–Sun noon–8:30pm, and for Cyclones home games.

Itinerary 2: From Brooklyn Bridge to DUMBO

How to Get There	To reach the Brooklyn Bridge, take the J/M/Z to Chambers Street or the 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall. Return from DUMBO on the F train at York Street, or walk about 15 minutes to Brooklyn Heights to catch the A/C train at High Street, or the 2/3 train at Clark Street.
How Long to Spend There	The walk across the bridge takes 30 minutes or so, and it's easy to spend an hour walking around on the Brooklyn side. Adding galleries, meals, and park time will stretch out the visit to 2 or 3 hours.
Best Times to Go	A sunny afternoon is ideal, but it's all good. Late at night the bridge and DUMBO are close to deserted. It's more disconcerting than it is dangerous, but unless you're familiar with the area I recommend against it.
Tip	If you're interested in the galleries, check in advance to see which ones have exhibits up. Note that galleries in DUMBO keep different hours than those in Manhattan; many are closed mid-week, but open on Sundays.

ITINERARY 2: FROM BROOKLYN BRIDGE TO DUMBO



1 The Bridge

The Brooklyn Bridge is one of New York's great treasures, and as such it's not a very well kept secret. Tourists, bikers, joggers, and commuters flood the planks on sunny days. The dizzying rigging, stunning views, and towering Gothic charm leave a person feeling like they're within the sanctuary of an inside-out cathedral. The bridge's official romance with New York began in 1883, and from Walt Whitman through Hart Crane, the love has only grown. When you reach the first tower, stop for a while so you can admire the Manhattan views. The assorted plaques here are a mix of the ceremonial and the informative.

2 The Brooklyn Side: DUMBO & Its Galleries

On the far side of the bridge, the pathway slants downward and divides. Staying to the right takes you to Downtown Brooklyn and

Brooklyn Bridge/DUMBO Costs

Free	
Historic walk, art galleries, afternoon in the park	$0
Dirt Cheap	
Walk, art, park, plus an ice cream cone or hot chocolate	$3–$3.50
Add-Ons for Spendthrift Millionaires	
Cuban sandwich at Pedro's	$5
Brunch at Rice	$10

Brooklyn Heights, and veering to the left will put you beneath an overpass. Walk down the stairs, hang left, and head toward the water. You'll find yourself among the cobblestones and broad-shouldered buildings that characterize **DUMBO.** DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) is a surprisingly well-preserved patch of old industrial New York. Artists have infiltrated the area, and their touches can be seen on and around many of the loft structures. For a closer look, check out some of the galleries. (Even if you hate the art, many of the spaces have killer views.)

- **BAC Gallery** FREE The gallery arm of the Brooklyn Arts Council. 111 Front St., #218, btw. Washington and Adams sts. ✆ **718/625-0080.** www.brooklynartscouncil.org. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm.
- **DUMBO Arts Center** FREE A 3,000-square-foot gallery. 30 Washington St., btw. Water and Plymouth sts. ✆ **718/694-0831.** www.dumboartscenter.org. Wed–Mon noon–6pm.
- **5 + 5 Gallery** FREE Works on paper specialist. 111 Front St., #210, btw. Washington and Adams sts. ✆ **718/488-8383.** www.5plus5gallery.com. Sun–Thurs 11am–6pm; Fri 11am–5pm, except closed Fri in winter; call ahead to check Sat hours.
- **Smack Mellon Studio** FREE A DUMBO classic in a new home. 92 Plymouth St., btw. Washington and Main sts. Check the website for free artists' talks. ✆ **718/834-8761.** www.smackmellon.org. Wed–Sun noon–6pm.

3 A Moment of Zen & Vinegar Hill

When you've had your fill of art, walk up Front Street (keeping the water to your left). When you reach Gold Street, peek through the yellow cement blocks on the corner. The compound inside

Crossings Over

New York's two other East Village crossings are more utilitarian approaches to Brooklyn, but they're excellent alternatives if you've already done the Brooklyn Bridge to death. The Williamsburg Bridge is newly refurbished, with walk- and bikeways to connect Billyburg with the Lower East Side. The Manhattan Bridge's pathway is narrow and the subway can be near deafening, but the views are unimpeachable. On the Manhattan end you get ancient tenements cutting razor-sharp lines through Chinatown, at midpoint you overlook the stunning full span of the Brooklyn Bridge, and on the far side you can spy on the parks of DUMBO.

belongs to the **Dorje Ling Buddhist Center.** When Front Street dead-ends take a left and enter my favorite forgotten neighborhood in New York, Vinegar Hill. The well-preserved mid-19th-century buildings are oddly juxtaposed with a field of electrical transformers. The neighborhood is only 4 square blocks, so it's a quick tour. Taking a right on Evans Street will bring you to a cul-de-sac, where you'll see an elegant white house behind a gate. Between 1806 and 1966 this is where the Navy Yard commandant hung his hat, while keeping watch over the outfitting of ships to fight everything from Barbary pirates to Nazis. The residence is now in private hands, and the Navy Yard is closed to the public. If you're interested in checking out the vine-smothered ruins of old naval housing, walk up Navy Street and turn left onto Nassau Street (it becomes Flushing Ave.), and then retrace your steps. Otherwise, double back down to Plymouth Street and walk south to DUMBO.

4 Mealtime

- Asian fusion fave **Rice** brings its exotic grains to Brooklyn, from Thai black to Bhutanese red. Starches are accompanied by curries, salads, and satays. Most every dish is under $10, with brunch running noon to 4pm on the weekends. There's a great side garden, should the weather accommodate.
- My personal favorite is **Pedro's,** a ramshackle basement with the feel of a David Lynch flick.

Dim Sum Good Eats

The entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge is just behind City Hall, which is just behind Chinatown, which is the cheapest place around to fuel up for a hearty walk. At dim sum brunches, carts full of dumplings and other delights are wheeled around the big banquet halls of Chinatown restaurants. It's easy to pack away a lot of food for no more than $10. My favorite spot is Chinatown's **Golden Unicorn,** with a lobby that on weekends looks like an office building during a fire drill. With four banquet hall floors, the wait for dumplings, pork-filled noodle crepes, and balls of shrimp and eggplant usually isn't too long, and on weekdays you can waltz right in. 18 E. Broadway, at Catherine St. ✆ **212/941-0911.** Mon–Fri 9am–11pm; Sat–Sun 8am–midnight; dim sum until 4pm. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Dominican and Mexican food are served, with a big plate of pork, rice, and beans for only $7. Mismatched booths on street level allow for leisurely alfresco dining (with cheap margaritas).

5 Park It

DUMBO offers twin spots for the cooling of jets, the **Empire–Fulton Ferry State Park** and **Brooklyn Bridge Park.** The former was the point of departure for the Manhattan ferry, which ran until 1924 despite competition from the Brooklyn Bridge. The northern park was a parking lot until it was decided that billion-dollar views of the city, the water, and the bridges might be better appreciated by human beings than panel trucks. The boat traffic and skyline are both hypnotizing, and this is my favorite place to chill in the entire city.

6 Bonus Round: Brooklyn Heights

Just up the hill on the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge lies Brooklyn Heights. The neighborhood is staid, but the historic building stock is astounding. The fruit streets (Pineapple St., Orange St., and Cranberry St., running east-west) are especially nice to stroll through. The **Brooklyn Promenade** along the Hudson has brilliant views of the Manhattan skyline.

Special Events

- Thursday nights in July and August, walk over the Brooklyn Bridge and then reward yourself with a free flick. The **Brooklyn Bridge Park "Movies With a**

Make a Sweet Date

The Brooklyn Bridge at night is one of the most romantic spots in the city. You can take in the Manhattan skyline, plus the shimmering lights of Brooklyn, plus the mystery of the dark water below, plied by tugs and ferries. In the hours after dusk there's still plenty of foot traffic on the bridge so there's no menace, but it's much more secluded and sedate than at its rush hour and high noon peaks. If you've done a little planning, you can crank up the romance level a few notches by timing your visit with moonrise, creeping up over the Brooklyn skyline. Check the paper or a weather website for the exact time, and allow an extra 20 minutes or so for the satellite to clear the rooflines. If you're really organized, make the date for the full moon—it's the best free show the city's got.

After strolling along the bridge, cool down at the Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory. The ice cream here is as pleasurable as the view, well worth the $3.50 per cone. A little more inland, chocolatier extraordinaire Jacques Torres operates a factory out of DUMBO. Though the chocolates themselves could never be confused with dirt cheap, once they take liquid form they become affordable. Drink the hot chocolate and you're basically drinking a candy bar. Order the "wicked" version, with its subtle hot pepper hints, and enjoy extra warmth. This rich treat is a relative bargain at $3 ($3.50 for a large).

View" Summer Film Series projects in the shadow of the anchorage. (See p. 56 in "Entertainment" for a full review.)

- One weekend in late September (Fri–Sun) you can get the entire DUMBO arts scene at once. During the **d.u.m.b.o. art under the bridge festival,** galleries and artists' studios open their doors. There's also live music and performances, as well as art installations adorning the streets. The DUMBO Art Center has a brochure with listings and a map (see p. 267 in "Exploring New York" for more info).
- Every July, the **Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition** curates an **outdoor sculpture show** at Empire–Fulton Ferry

State Park. It's my favorite time to visit, as the installations always re-contextualize the contours of the park and its views. The show runs for 6 weeks or so.

Itinerary 2 Index

Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory Fulton Ferry Landing Pier, btw. Old Fulton and Water sts. ✆ 718/246-3963. Daily noon–10pm, until 11pm Thurs–Sun in summer; Oct–Apr closed Mon.

Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition ✆ 718/596-2506. www.bwac.org.

Dorje Ling Buddhist Center 98 Gold St., at Spruce St. ✆ 718/522-6523. www.jonang.org.

Jacques Torres 66 Water St., near Main St. ✆ 718/875-9772. www.mrchocolate.com. Mon–Sat 9am–7pm; Sun 10am–6pm.

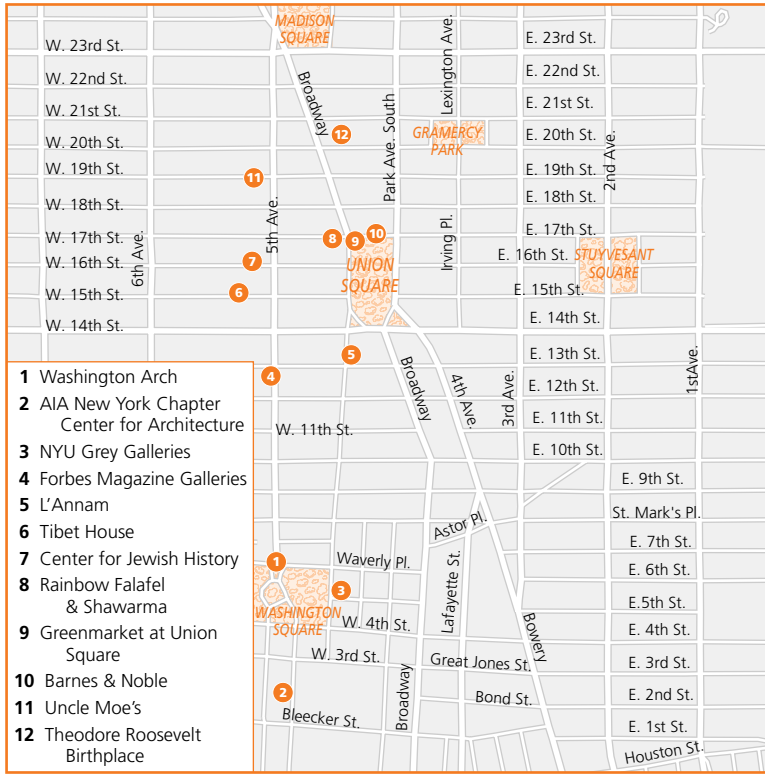
Pedro's 73 Jay St., at Front St. ✆ 718/625-0031. Mon–Sat 8am–11pm, sometimes open later on Fri and Sat nights, depending on the crowd; Sun noon–8pm. ***Note:*** All hours are approximate; exact open hours are determined daily.

Rice 81 Washington St., btw. Front and York sts. ✆ 718/222-9880. www.riceny.com. Daily noon–11pm.

Itinerary 3: Square Deals, From Washington to Union

How to Get There	Take the A/B/C/D/E/F/V to W. 4th St.–Washington Sq.
How Long to Spend There	The walking distances here are short and can be covered on foot in just a few minutes, but if you stop to linger over the exhibits, it can take a couple of hours.
Best Times to Go	Traffic flow is pretty constant, both for the park (crowded) and the exhibits (underused). Some of the latter are closed by 4pm, as well as all day Sunday. If you want to take advantage of the Greenmarket, make sure you're here on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or Saturday.

ITINERARY 3: SQUARE DEALS, FROM WASHINGTON TO UNION



1 Washington Square

Nothing restores my faith in New York City quite like Washington Square Park. Functioning as a quad for both NYU students and Village locals, the juxtapositions of New York's various strata make for peerless people-watching. Looking around at the circus atmosphere, it doesn't seem that hard to believe that trout fishing, burials, and public hangings are all part of this park's legacy. You can often find free entertainment courtesy of itinerant street performers at the central fountain. Along the fringes of the park, neighborhood musicians noodle, or lead day-into-night singalongs. On the park's north end, a major restoration has **Stanford White's Washington Arch** positively glowing. Soak up some atmosphere, and then peek into a couple of the interesting cultural attractions on the surrounding blocks.

Square Deals Costs

Free	
5 museums/exhibits, a tour, and a literary reading	$0
Dirt Cheap	
The exhibits/museums, tour, literary reading, plus a visit to a presidential birthplace	$3
Add-Ons for Spendthrift Millionaires	
Curry chicken and rice lunch	$5.95
Chicken burrito	$5.95
Chicken kabob sandwich	$4.75

2 NYU Grey Galleries

NYU is one of the city's biggest landlords, and they own most of the territory surrounding Washington Square. Directly east of the park you'll find a nice NYU-run art space. The Grey Galleries, in the middle of the street on Washington Square East, show off every side of the visual arts, from painting to photo to sculpture. There's a lot of space, allowing shows to be fairly comprehensive. After a look here, cut down to the bottom of the park and take a left on Washington Square South, followed by a quick left onto LaGuardia Place. A little ways down you'll find the:

3 AIA New York Chapter Center for Architecture

The exhibits here tend to be esoteric, geared more to the professional architect than the public at large. The space is interesting, however, with a nice layout. Beneath the ground floor is a side room that shows off the building's geothermal heating and cooling system: They drilled down deeper than the Empire State Building is high in order to make it work. When you're done, cut through Washington Square Park and walk 5 blocks up Fifth Avenue to #62.

4 Forbes Magazine Galleries

Magazine magnate Malcolm Forbes' galleries here approximate what a 10-year-old boy with unlimited financial means would think to collect. Fortunately, a 10-year-old boy's enthusiasms radiate off the exhibits as well. Every time I visit I find myself infected, caring more than I ever thought I could about model boats, toy soldiers, Monopoly boards, and trophies. For longer attention spans, the collection of presidential papers makes for engrossing reading. Walk 3 blocks up to 15th Street and take a left.

5 Tibet House U.S.

The faceless apartment house at 22 West 15th St. is an unlikely place to find inspiring Tibetan art, but the second floor is home to a small collection of beautiful paintings, sculptures, and artifacts. The art is intricate and vibrant, and the quiet rooms encourage lingering. A large gallery space hosts rotating shows with a Tibetan angle. When you're done, double back to Fifth Avenue and walk up 1 block to 16th Street, where you'll take a left.

6 Center for Jewish History

The multi-floor Center for Jewish History at 15 West 16th St. hosts several simultaneous exhibitions. Pass through the metal detector and get a badge at the front desk. Displays range from photo shows to manuscripts to paintings, most documenting Jewish contributions to American society. Artifacts are well-lit, and exhibit notes are informative without running on too long. Everything is free except for the **Yeshiva University Museum** galleries, which require a separate fee. For more American history, walk 4 blocks up to 20th Street and take a right, passing Broadway to 28 East 20th St.

7 Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace

Theodore Roosevelt led an unlikely life. An asthmatic son of a prominent New York family, T. R. transformed himself into a symbol of fortitude, becoming a rancher, a soldier, a governor, and eventually the only New York City native elected president. Along the way he managed to write some 33 books, and the exhibitions in his childhood home can make a visitor feel like they don't get nearly enough done in a day. The original town house was demolished in 1916, but 3 years later friends and family built a replica on the site. Period pieces, the majority of which belonged to the Roosevelts, fill the stately rooms. A pair of galleries covers Roosevelt's conservationist achievements and memorabilia from his fascinating life. Take one of the informative hourly tours and you'll learn Eleanor Roosevelt's maiden name (it was Roosevelt), the origins of the teddy bear, and that T. R. survived losing his wife and mother on the same day. Admission is $3.

8 Union Square

Three blocks south on Broadway will take you to Union Square. The park here opened in 1831, about the same time New York's

Make a Date

It's hard to make a full-out meal on the go from the Union Square Greenmarket, but it's easy to snack, or assemble a serendipitous minipicnic. In my own delicacy hierarchy, the apples are at the top. Dozens of plump varieties—not just the three or four flavorless waxed models of a supermarket—fill upstate farmers' tables. Baked goods are another specialty here, with both sweets and gourmet breads represented. Buy some artisanal cheese and you're in business. Picnic tables are available at the north end of the park. Open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8am to 6pm.

If you're a careful planner, you can go right from your picnic to a free reading. The Barnes & Noble opposite the north end of Union Square is one of the city's best bookstores. Their reading series routinely attracts big names.

wealthy reached this elevation on their inexorable climb uptown. The elegant neighborhood was soon steeped in culture, with an influx of theaters and concert halls. Over the next few decades, the moneyed set moved on, and by World War I the area was in decline. Union Square remained a popular location for labor rallies and protests, but the side streets got seedier and seedier. You can learn all about the neighborhood's history on a lively free walking tour given by the **Union Square BID** every Saturday afternoon at 2pm. Meet at the Lincoln statue near the pavilion on the northern part of the park. When New York turned things around in the '80s, Union Square once again became the province of big spenders. Many of the city's trendiest and most expensive restaurants now fill the high-ceilinged spaces of cast-iron landmarks. The area is a popular shopping destination, which may contribute to general ignorance about the nearby cluster of cultural gems.

9 Mealtime

Besides the Greenmarket, you can find more substantial cheap eats all around Union Square. Three of my favorite spots in the city are nearby:

- At **Rainbow Falafel & Shawarma,** the crispy falafel sandwich with marinated onions is just about perfect, and a steal at $3.50. There's no room to sit,

but picnic opportunities abound in Union Square. See also the review on p. 115.

- Republic is Union Square's most famous noodle shop, but I find the place to be overrated, and inferior to the Vietnamese cuisine at **L'Annam.** Monster bowls of *pho* and hot-and-sour soup are $6.50, and the majority of entrees are under $10. I especially love the rice vermicelli dishes. The luncheon special from 11:30am to 4:30pm is a mere $5.95, and dinner to go is only 55¢ more.
- New York seems destined to never have real Mission-style burritos, but **Uncle Moe's** serves up an array of California-Mexican standbys that are almost as tasty. Burritos range from $5.95 to $7.95, depending on ingredients. A whole rotisserie chicken is only $11.95, and that comes with rice, beans, and corn tortillas. The ingredients are fresh, and you'll find plenty of tables to sit at and enjoy.

Itinerary 3 Index

AIA New York Chapter Center for Architecture 536 LaGuardia Place, btw. Bleecker and W. 3rd sts. ✆ 212/683-0023. www.aiany.org. Mon–Fri 9am–8pm; Sat 11am–5pm.

Barnes & Noble 33 E. 17th St., btw. Broadway and Park Ave. S. ✆ 212/253-0810. www.bn.com. Daily 10am–10pm.

Bryant Park Between 40th and 42nd sts., 5th and 6th aves. ✆ 212/768-4242. www.bryantpark.org.

Center for Jewish History 15 W. 16th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ 212/294-8301. www.cjh.org. Galleries Mon–Thurs 9:30am–5pm; Fri 9am–3pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

Forbes Magazine Galleries 62 Fifth Ave., at 12th St. ✆ 212/206-5548. www.forbesgalleries.com. Tues–Wed, Fri–Sat 10am–4pm.

Grey Art Gallery, New York University 100 Washington Sq. East, btw. Washington Sq. South and North. ✆ 212/998-6780. www.nyu.edu/greyart. Tues, Thurs–Fri 11am–6pm; Wed 11am–8pm; Sat 11am–5pm. Suggested admission $3, not enforced.

***Intrepid* Sea, Air & Space Museum** Pier 86, W. 46th St. at Twelfth Ave. ✆ **212/245-0072.** www.intrepidmuseum.org. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm. Sat–Sun 10am–6pm. General admission $16.50; free for active duty U.S. military (with valid ID).

L'Annam 121 University Place, at 13th St. ✆ **212/420-1179.** Daily 11:30am–midnight.

Rainbow Falafel & Shawarma 26 E. 17th St., btw. Broadway and Fifth Ave. ✆ **212/691-8641.** Mon–Fri 11am–6pm.

Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace 28 E. 20th St., btw. Broadway and Park Ave. S. ✆ **212/260-1616.** www.nps.gov/thrb. Admission $3 adults. Tues–Sat 9am–5pm (tours hourly 10am–4pm).

Tibet House 22 W. 15th St., 2nd floor, btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/807-0563.** www.tibethouse.org. Admission is free, although they do suggest a donation. Mon–Fri noon–5pm.

Uncle Moe's 14 W. 19th St., btw. Fifth and Sixth aves. ✆ **212/727-9400.** Mon–Fri 11:30am–9:30pm; Sat noon–6pm.

Union Square BID ✆ **212/460-1200.** Walking tour, ✆ **212/517-1826.** www.unionsquarenyc.org.

Itinerary 4: Crosstown Through the Crossroads of the World—From the U.N. to the Hudson

How to Get There	The nearest trains to the east are the 4/5/6/7 and Shuttle trains at Grand Central Station. The west side is close to the A/C/E, 7, and 1/2/3 trains.
How Long to Spend There	Just under 2 miles, this walk can take an hour with quick stop-offs, or over 2 hours with longer deviations.
Best Times to Go	The middle stretch bustles at all hours, just as the fringes are generally pretty calm. One great time is late afternoon. Looking back east from Ninth Avenue at dusk is an amazing experience, with all the lights and the area's brand-new skyscrapers adorning an already-decadent skyline.
Tips	Consider timing your walk so you can take advantage of a free or cheap event. Availability of tours, movies, dance, theater, and music is outlined below.

New York is intimidatingly large and complex, and few tourists are assuaged when you explain that Manhattan at its longest is only 13.5 miles long and 2.3 miles wide. Legendary 42nd Street is a perfect street for trying to come to terms with the city's range through a single, narrow slice. A walk along this schizophrenic cross-street (with a deviation here and there) brings you from the International Style idealism of the United Nations, through the classic New York icons of Grand Central Station and the Public Library, into the continental repose of Bryant Park, past the tourist/lunatic asylum of garish Times Square, through the cultural magnet of Theater Row, and finally out to the industrial fringes along the Hudson. The whole trip is only 2 miles, but it spans the eras, cultures, and contrasts of New York City.

1 The United Nations

Walk due east from the Lexington subway line and you'll experience a dramatic shift, as the hustle of the avenues gives way to the genteel village of Tudor City. When you reach First Avenue, head north along the United Nations Plaza. This is it—the literal capital of the world. At 46th Street you'll find the public entrance. After going through the security line, which moves with all the efficiency and enthusiasm of an American airport's, you'll enter the Visitors' Lobby. Built in 1950, it's a little dated but still impressive. Multiple U.N.-related art exhibits fill the space. For $13.50 you can take a full tour of the building, but if you're into cheaper thrills the Headquarters Park is a worthy diversion. Sculpture is scattered across a grassy expanse built on a scale rarely found in Manhattan. Wide vistas of Long Island City, Queens are across the river. When you're through, make your way south back toward 42nd. If you haven't eaten yet, you might consider a quick stop-off on Second Avenue and 43rd or Third Avenue and 45th.

2 Omusubi, Oh My

This little expat shop puts rice balls together with whimsy and creativity. Executed with artistic flair, the concoctions split the difference between rice balls and maki, with strong flavors like burdock, wasabi shrimp, and plum. Although this is probably closer to snack food than meal fodder, it's cheap at $1.25 per ball, and ball and soup combos for $10 and under.

3 Looking for Mr. Goodburger

Goodburger is a new restaurant with an old formula: burgers cooked to order in a friendly, malt shoppe–style atmosphere.

42nd Street Costs

Free	
Two parks, a walking tour, and two exhibitions	$0
Dirt Cheap	
Parks, a walking tour, two exhibitions, and two tacos	$5
Add-Ons for Spendthrift Millionaires	
A beer and two hot dogs at Rudy's	$3.50

Seats are hard to come by during business lunch hours, but the place is navigable off-peak. A juicy burger is $5.95, and an extra 80¢ makes it a cheeseburger. Goodburger stands in the shadow of one of Manhattan's greatest icons, on 42nd between Third and Lexington avenues.

4 Hop in my Chrysler

Though the Chrysler Building only got to enjoy its status as the world's tallest building for a few months (construction of the Empire State Building was hot on the Chrysler's heels), it holds a secure place in the hearts of architecture-loving New Yorkers. The stainless-steel Deco crown, with its jeweled notches, seems perpetually aglow, whether from sunlight or its own internal illumination. Designed by William Van Alen and completed in 1930, the building isn't much to look at up close, but you'll have nice vistas when you get some distance. Hang a right on 42nd to enter the lobby, where you'll be immersed in Art Deco overload (if this entrance is closed, there's a second one around the corner at 405 Lexington). Standing beneath the groovy ceiling mural and glossy marble veneers has an unexpected cavern effect.

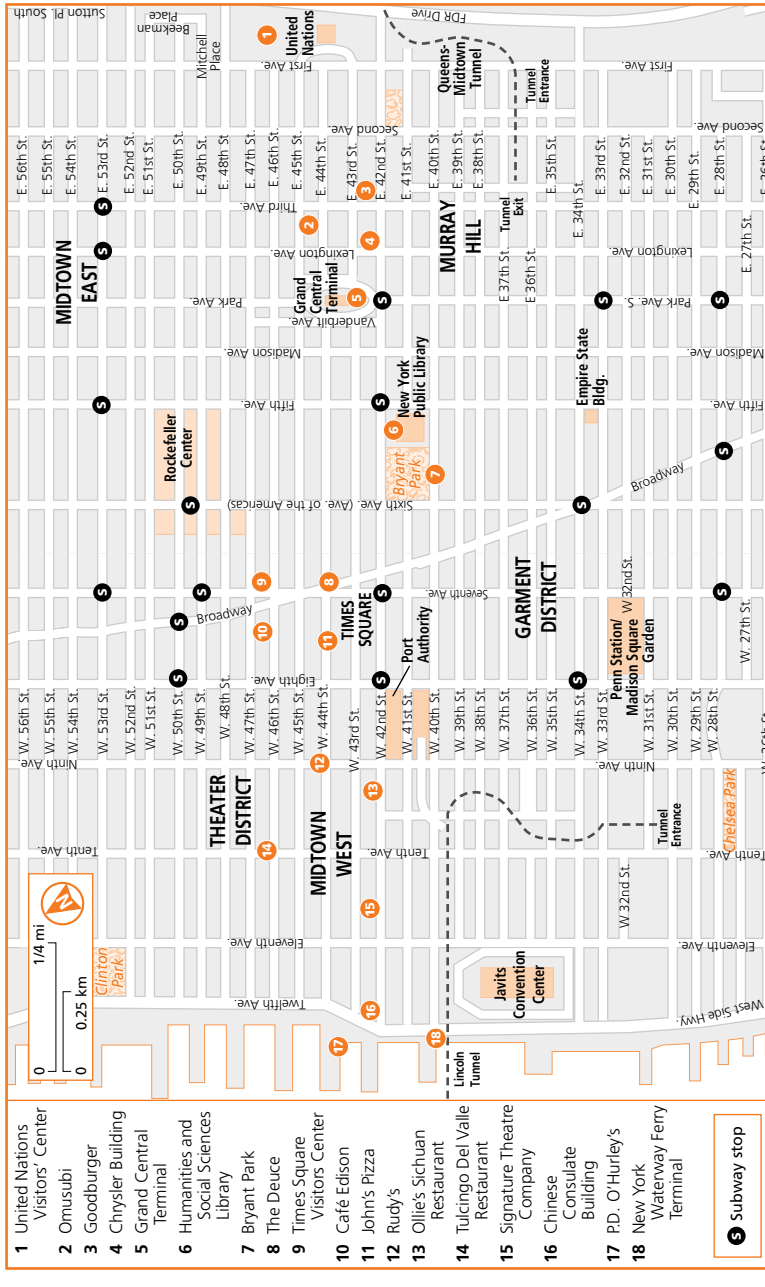
5 Grand Central

Grand Central Terminal in its new restoration is as inspiring as public buildings get. It cost $175 million to get the 1913 Beaux Arts landmark in this shape, but you can enjoy it all for free. In the main concourse look down to admire half an acre of gleaming Tennessee marble. Look up and you'll see how the constellations of a New York winter sky would appear, were the roof and the light pollution gone. Free art exhibits are often mounted in adjacent Vanderbilt Hall.

6 Reading Between the Lions: The Library

Officially called the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, this 1911 icon features elegant Beaux Arts architecture, discreet landscaping, and famous steps. I love to people-watch here; the constant bustle is hypnotizing. When

ITINERARY 4: FROM THE U.N. TO THE HUDSON



But I Digress

For some quickie edification, when you're through with Grand Central, cut down Park to 41st Street. Embedded in the sidewalks on both sides of 41st between Park and Fifth avenues are plaques reminiscent of the Hollywood Walk of Fame, only with elegantly illustrated literary quotations instead of handprints of washed-up celebrities. But hey, that's the difference between New York and L.A. The quotes lead you to a nice vantage of the classical triangular facade of the New York Public Library.

you make it inside, you'll find the hushed interior just as impressive. Rotating exhibits show off rare editions from the collection. The thoughtful captions are a great reading experience on their own. As you leave, take a moment to admire the twin lion guards, Fortitude and Patience. These two traits will serve you well when you reach the Times Square segment of 42nd Street.

7 Bryant Park

Looking at the flourishing vegetation around the pebbled paths and Parisian folding chairs, it's hard to imagine that until the early '90s Bryant Park carried the nickname "Manhattan's longest urinal." In its current fully gentrified form, this park is an oasis of European charm plunked right in the middle of harried Midtown. Further Old World touches include a free skating rink (in winter), and the elaborate sculpted animals of Le Carrousel ($2 per ride). Summer Mondays bring free films at dusk, and all through the warm months you'll find free music aplenty (see p. 54 and 42, respectively, for more information).

8 The Deuce

Once you cross over Sixth Avenue, the crowds start to thicken. The intersections at Seventh Avenue and Broadway are among the most congested in the city. New York's refined theater scene thrived here in the early years of the 20th century. As the economy soured during the Depression, though, highbrow entertainment gave way to vaudeville. Vaudeville begat burlesque, and burlesque opened the door for garden-variety sleaze of every hue. The stretch toward Eighth became known as the "Forty Deuce," or just "The Deuce." Though there's still neon aplenty today, the peep shows have been replaced with sleaze of a corporate character. It doesn't seem to deter the tourist throngs, however.

Grand Tours

There are four, count 'em *four,* free tours waiting to edify you on and around 42nd Street. On Wednesdays at half past noon, the Municipal Art Society offers a walking tour of **Grand Central Terminal.** They ask for a $10 donation, but there's no formal fee, just whatever you care to contribute. Meet at the information booth in the middle of the concourse, where you'll get great inside dope on America's commuter temple. The local BID, the Grand Central Partnership, runs a free tour on Fridays, also at half past noon. The tour meets at the **Altria** building across the street from the Terminal. The **New York Public Library** shows itself off twice a day. Tours meet Monday through Saturday at 11am and again at 2pm beside the information desk in Astor Hall; the Sunday tour is at 2pm only. When there's an exhibit mounted at Gottesman Hall, you can get a separate tour. Meet Tuesday through Saturday at 12:30 and 2:30pm, and also on Sunday at 3:30pm, at the entrance to the hall. Fourth and finally, the **Times Square** BID leads tours from its visitor center on Seventh Avenue, between 46th and 47th streets. Tours go every Friday at noon. Of the four tours, this is the most bland, taking a mainstream approach to an overcommercialized stretch.

9 A Play on Theater Row

As you get past the madness of the Port Authority Bus Terminal (7,200 buses and 200,000 passengers come through here on an average weekday), the streets calm down. Huge, newly cleared lots are signs of imminent, gargantuan condo construction, to join the houses in the sky already here. Along "Theater Row" most of the stages are well above the dirt cheap threshold, though the Signature Theatre Company recently received a grant to put on deeply discounted performances. Just $20 will get you a seat for the regular production run of every show (although they sell out of them commensurately quickly). Despite the industrial structures and clearings, as you reach the far west the area starts to feel a little like a village again, a parallel universe to 42nd's opposite end in Tudor City.

10 The Hudson

Look up to the north and you'll see the ***Intrepid*** battleship, which is inexplicably floating in the Hudson at the end of 46th Street. The 40,000-ton *Intrepid* was once a city itself, with some 3,000 sailors on board. Now it's a museum with a substantial entrance fee ($16.50 for adults; battleship maintenance is apparently pretty steep when you're not taxpayer-subsidized), but the decks can be circled and admired for free. Recently refurbished and re-docked, the ship sits along brand-new parkland at Pier 84. The grassy expanse here offers that rare New York commodity: the feeling of a surplus of space. Stroll to the end and enjoy the river, the sweep of the Jersey shoreline, and the Midtown skyline behind you. (For $7.50 you can float away from Midtown altogether—boats connect to Hoboken from the station at 39th St.; and the Water Taxi departs from 43rd St., both with dramatic views all the way.)

Before you move on, make sure to look back across Twelfth Avenue for views of the **Chinese Consulate Building.** At the end of 2 miles of attention-grabbing skyscrapers and neon signage, this building manages to be the oddest duck on the strip.

11 Mealtime & Libations

If you passed on dining at Goodburger and Omusubi, you are not out of options. Ninth and Tenth avenues in Hell's Kitchen are loaded with cheap ethnic food. There's a burgeoning Mexican scene here, though my favorite sit-down spot by far is:

- **Tulcingo Del Valle Restaurant,** which is about as authentic as NYC gets. A specials board (everything is under $10) lists fresh-made entree platters, like chicken in a green pumpkin-seed sauce. Tacos, including the delicious carne asada, are just $2.50 to $2.75 a pop.

At pier 84 you can picnic or take a seat at outdoor tables:

- **P.D. O'Hurley's** has basic burger, kebab, and salad pub grub, with reasonable prices, especially given the lovely water views. On a summer evening, this is a nice spot to relax with a cold Sam Adams.

A couple of favorites for the pre-theater crowd are nearby:

- At **Ollie's Sichuan Restaurant,** huge bowls of soup and noodle dishes come in under $7. Most dinner entrees are under $11, and two-course lunch specials run $6.95.

- **John's Pizza** makes real New York pizza, and they sell it by the pie—no slices here. A large runs from $12 to $16, plus another $2.25 per topping.

Between Broadway and Eighth you'll find:

- The mural-adorned **Café Edison** is a classic, pre-gentrification New York coffee shop lodged inside the Hotel Edison. Deli sandwiches come in under $7, and a huge bowl of the famous matzoh ball soup is only $4.
- But why pay for a meal when you can eat for free? **Rudy's** knows a person can work up an appetite over a few pints. As a public service, this neighborhood dive distributes **free hot dogs.** Order a drink first, though. After all that walking, you've earned it.

Itinerary 4 Index

Café Edison 228 W. 47th St., btw. Broadway and Eighth Ave. ✆ 212/840-5000. Mon–Sat 6am–9:30pm; Sun 6am–7:30pm.

Goodburger 200 Second Ave., at 42nd. ✆ 212/922-1700. www.goodburgerny.com. Sun–Thurs 10am–10pm; Fri–Sat 10am–11pm.

Grand Central Partnership ✆ 212/883-2420. www.grandcentralpartnership.org.

Humanities and Social Sciences Library Fifth Ave. and 42nd St. ✆ 212/869-8089 for exhibits and events; or ✆ 212/661-7220 for library hours. www.nypl.org. Mon, Thurs–Sat 11am–6pm; Tues–Wed 11am–7:30pm; Sun 1–5pm.

John's Pizza 260 W. 44th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves. ✆ 212/391-7560. www.johnspizzerianyc.com. Daily 11:30am–11:30pm.

Municipal Art Society ✆ 212/935-3960. www.mas.org.

Ollie's Noodle Shop & Grille 411 W. 42nd St., btw. Ninth and Dyer aves. ✆ 212/921-5988. www.ollies42.com. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–11pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight; Sun noon–10pm.

Omusubi 156 E. 45th St., btw. Third and Lexington aves. ✆ 212/922-9788. Mon–Fri 8am–7:30pm; Sat 11:30am–5pm.

P.D. O'Hurley's Pier 84, at the Hudson. ✆ 917/370-3448. Mon–Fri 4–10pm; Sat–Sun 11am–10pm.

Rudy's 627 Ninth Ave., at W. 44th St. ✆ 212/974-9169. Free hot dogs daily 1–10pm.

Signature Theatre Company 555 W. 42nd St., btw. Tenth and Eleventh aves. ✆ 212/244-7529. www.signaturetheatre.org.

Staten Island Ferry From Whitehall Ferry Terminal, at State St. ✆ 718/815-BOAT [2628]. www.siferry.com.

Times Square Visitors Center 1560 Seventh Ave., btw. 46th and 47th sts. ✆ 212/768-1560. www.timessquarenyc.org.

Tulcingo Del Valle Restaurant 655 Tenth Ave., btw. 46th and 47th sts. ✆ 212/262-5510. www.tulcingorestaurant.com. Mon–Sat 8am–10pm; Sun 10am–10pm.

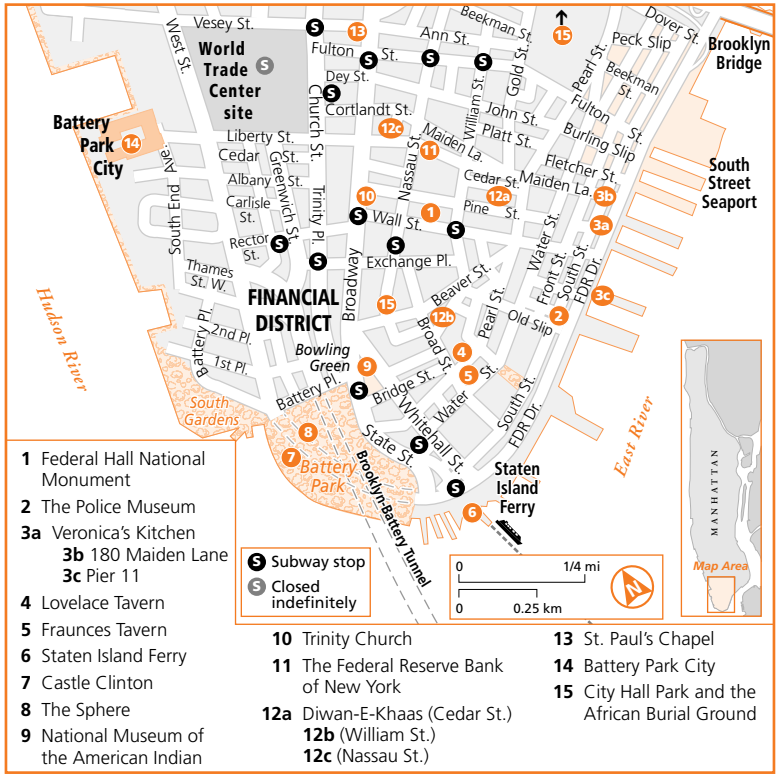
United Nations Visitors' Center Free exhibits and sculpture park, tours for $13.50. First Ave. at 46th St. ✆ 212/963-4475. www.un.org. Daily 9am–5pm; closed weekends Jan–Feb.

Itinerary 5: The Secrets of Lower Manhattan

Where	Lower Manhattan, skirting the East River, Hudson, and New York Harbor.
How to Get There	The area is very well covered by trains; J/M/Z trains to Broad Street and 2/3/4/5 trains to Wall Street are good places to start.
How Long to Spend There	A straight walk can be done in an hour. To get your fill of museums add 2 more hours, and a round-trip on the ferry clocks in at another hour.
Best Times to Go	The ferry's views of downtown and the Statue of Liberty are great at night, and incomparable at dusk.
Tips	On the weekends Lower Manhattan feels deserted, with tourists the only signs of life. Quiet streets in New York are a great luxury, but many of the museums and almost all of the stores and restaurants are closed. To really get a feel for the area, hit it on a weekday.

The combination of too many tourists and too many uptight money-grubbers doesn't exactly make for an inviting scene, but the Financial District gets a bad rap. New York City's post–Native American life began here, and the oddly shaped streets attest to the patterns of ancient, organic urban planning. New York is notorious for paving over its own

ITINERARY 5: THE SECRETS OF LOWER MANHATTAN



1 Federal Hall National Monument
2 The Police Museum
3a Veronica's Kitchen
3b 180 Maiden Lane
3c Pier 11
4 Lovelace Tavern
5 Fraunces Tavern
6 Staten Island Ferry
7 Castle Clinton
8 The Sphere
9 National Museum of the American Indian
10 Trinity Church
11 The Federal Reserve Bank of New York
12a Diwan-E-Khaas (Cedar St.)
12b (William St.)
12c (Nassau St.)
13 St. Paul's Chapel
14 Battery Park City
15 City Hall Park and the African Burial Ground

history, but Lower Manhattan has some unlikely survivors. The area is densely packed and even a short walk can put a person in easy reach of a host of historical sites. Ignore the $9 trillion that changes hands down here every year at the New York Stock Exchange; there are freebies aplenty for the discerning seeker.

1 Federal Hall National Memorial

This is not an especially popular memorial, probably because the really interesting stuff happened in predecessor structures on this site. Federal Hall was built in 1842 to serve as a customhouse, and it's now a Park Service museum. Exhibits touch on Washington's inauguration, the drafting of the Bill of Rights, and the first stirring of rebellion against British authority, all of which occurred right here. The building itself is a preeminent example of Greek

Lower Manhattan Walk Costs

Free	
Five museums, exhibits at two churches, and a round-trip ferry ride	$0
Dirt Cheap	
The museums, exhibits, ferry, and lunchtime concert	$2 (suggested donation)
Add-Ons for Spendthrift Millionaires	
Fraunces Tavern Museum	$4
Lunch	$7

Revival architecture, with an impressive rotunda. Beyond the architecture, there's not that much to see here beyond a comprehensive collection of New York brochures. The vertiginously steep stairs outside are a popular spot to spy on the chaos that surrounds the New York Stock Exchange. Head east on Wall Street, hang a left on Front Street, and then a right onto Old Slip.

2 The Police Museum

The Police Museum is housed in an odd fortress-like structure at the end of Old Slip that for six decades was the First Precinct Station House. The exhibits can be a little uneven, and in places the museum is more of a shrine than a source of information, but with three floors of galleries you're almost sure to find something of interest. I like the copper badges on the first floor (yes, that's where "cop" comes from), and the circa 1910–12 mug shots on the second floor. There is a suggested admission, but no one pays you much attention when you pass through the turnstile.

3 Meal Break

Nearby Front Street has several lunch vans to serve the worker bees from the adjoining financial and insurance offices.

- The best of the bunch is the **Veronica's Kitchen** truck, which parks at the corner of Front and Pine streets. West Indian plates are $5 to $8, highlighted by curried goat and beef, and oxtail that's been braised for three hours. For more familiar fare, try the Jiannetto's truck just down Front Street at Wall. Thick pizza slices are $2.75 and parmigiano chicken and eggplant rolls are $6. The area is dotted by benches and small parks, perfect for picnicking.
- In bad weather, head over to **180 Maiden Lane,** an office building designed by I. M. Pei. The ground floor atrium is public space, and every Tuesday

at 12:30pm students from the Juilliard School present classical recitals. No food is available here; this is a good picnic spot for your street meat, however.

- On a nice day, walk east to the river. Pier 11, at the end of Wall Street, has several benches for admiring the Brooklyn skyline as you nosh.

4 Lovelace Tavern

Make your way down Pearl Street. Just south of Coenties Alley, under the colonnade of the office building to your right, you'll see a brass railing over glass flooring. Peer through the glass and you'll be looking at stones laid in 1670. During construction of this skyscraper, the foundations of an ancient tavern were discovered. You can also see the foundations of successor structures, and a support beam for the eyesore high-rise overhead. A more famous historic tavern is across the street, just to the south at 54 Pearl.

5 Fraunces Tavern

This is definitely an optional stop because it comes with an admission charge. Fraunces Tavern has impressive historical credentials—the building's origins date from 1719, and George Washington gave his farewell speech to his officers in the Long Room upstairs—but multiple fires and remodels have made the current version something less than authentic. Your $4 entry ticket buys you a grainy 20-minute video and two floors of exhibits, including a re-creation of the Long Room and a flag gallery. Among the more interesting relics under glass is a lock of George's hair, which will be absolutely essential when it comes time to clone the father of our country. History buffs should definitely cough up for the tariff, but everyone else has my permission to keep moving.

6 Staten Island Ferry

You're now very close to the poor man's Circle Line, the Staten Island Ferry (✆ **718/815-BOAT** [2628]). This is one of my all-time favorite NYC freebies. From Manhattan to St. George and back again takes a little more than an hour, with inspiring views all the way. The brand-new terminal rises exuberantly over the water at the end of Whitehall and State streets. Find a seat on the right-hand side of the boat as you enter. You'll have great vantages of the downtown skyline, including the somber gap marking Ground Zero. About halfway through the ride, you'll spot Lady Liberty herself from the same western windows. Though there isn't all that much to do on the Staten Island side without a further bus or train ride, if you're

really organized you can catch an inexpensive minor league baseball game (p. 96), just a few steps from the terminal.

7 Castle Clinton

Back on the Manhattan side, a few steps west from the ferry is Battery Park. The park is anchored by Castle Clinton, a Napoleonic-era fort. Although this battery has undergone several renovations, from theater hall to aquarium, the original 1811 walls are still intact. Another wall of interest—recent MTA construction extracted a 1744 halfpenny, pipe shards, and some Delft pottery—has been reconstructed inside. If you walk in and look up, the modern skyline of downtown makes an interesting contrast through the open roof. There's a small stage on the east side that hosts free concerts on Thursday nights in summer, usually popular indie-rock bands (p. 42). The battery's now mostly used as the ticket station for the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island ferries; if you see a huge line, that's what it's for (and you may as well skip the peek at the fort's interior).

8 *The Sphere*

As you exit Castle Clinton, pass the Hope Garden and walk toward the modern art, which is part of a small, moving 9/11 memorial. Fritz Koenig's sculpture, the *Sphere,* stands behind an eternal flame lit on the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks. Koenig designed the *Sphere* as a symbol of world peace and for 30 years it adorned the plaza at the World Trade Center. The sculpture was salvaged from the rubble and placed here, where the shoreline would have been in 1625 New Amsterdam. Though battered and abused, the *Sphere* is surprisingly intact. There's a metaphor in there someplace, I hope.

9 National Museum of the American Indian

On the far side of the *Sphere* you'll hit a busy intersection that marks the end of Broadway. The petite park across the street is Bowling Green, Manhattan's oldest public park. It was here or very close by that Peter Minuit, director general of New Netherland, traded the legendary $24 in beads with the original locals. Just a few feet away the Smithsonian maintains a museum dedicated to those native populations. Most of the artifacts collected by New York banker George Gustav Heye are now on the Mall in D.C., but rotating exhibits remain in three galleries. Native American craftsmanship is unparalleled, and the exhibits here are well lit and lovingly curated. Even if the walls were bare, the building itself, the former U.S. Custom House,

would be worthy of a visit. It was completed in 1907 to the specifications of Beaux Arts master Cass Gilbert (he also did the nearby Woolworth Bldg.), and the central rotunda by Raphael Guastavino is a structural marvel. Make sure you see it before the Native Americans reclaim their title to Manhattan and the eviction notices begin.

10 Trinity Church

Head north on Broadway and at the intersection of Wall you'll see Trinity Church. Trinity has been ministering Episcopal-style on this spot since 1698. The current Gothic Revival church was built in 1846 and has a dark and somber interior. There's a small museum on-site. The churchyard is of more interest, with its ancient headstones somehow surviving in the shadow of Mammon. On Thursdays you can catch the **"Concerts at One"** program. (Mon the series comes to St. Paul's Chapel; see below.) The suggested admission is $2, which in no way reflects the high caliber of the classical performers found here.

11 The Federal Reserve Bank of New York

Walk up 3 blocks on Broadway and you'll hit Liberty Street. A right turn and a 1-block walk will bring you to the Florentine Renaissance hulk of the Federal Reserve Bank (see p. 236 for a full review). The American Numismatic Society keeps a gallery here, with a permanent exhibit on the history of money. You have to squint to see most of the coins, but the history behind them is fascinating. Among the cowrie shells and currency you'll find the only existing 1933 Double Eagle, a gold coin now worth some 400,000 times the value printed on its face.

12 Meal Break

Right around the corner is a small shop with fresh, delicious Indian food. **Diwan-E-Khaas** serves veggie entrees like rich palak paneer for only $5.77, and the chicken tikka masala is way undervalued at $6.70. Entrees include a choice of rice, nan, or roti.

13 St. Paul's Chapel

This satellite chapel of Trinity Church, completed in 1766, is the oldest continuously used public building in the city. The interior is surprisingly cheerful and colorful. Even the 9/11 exhibits have an upbeat and healing tone, although the self-congratulatory tone wears thin. On the north side of the chapel you can see the pew used by George Washington when New York was the official seat of the U.S. government and not just the de facto capital. Over the pew is a 1795 painting of the

Great Seal, in one of its earliest renditions. The small churchyard behind the chapel is visually tranquil, although often the traffic and bustle of Church Street around Ground Zero prevent auditory serenity. Behind the headstones the void of the former World Trade Center site appears as an eerie prairie. This might be the best spot in NYC to put the long thread of the city's history into some sort of context.

Bonus Round: Battery Park City

A recent invention, Battery Park City is a complex of offices, hotels, and apartment buildings built on fill created by the excavation of the World Trade Center's foundation in the '60s. The city has never done a better job of landscaping, and the walkways along the Hudson are ideal for strolling, or just sitting down to watch the river flow. **Vesey Street,** which runs along the north side of St. Paul's Chapel, will lead you past Ground Zero and straight down to the Hudson. The best perspective on Ground Zero can be found in the back of the Winter Garden inside the World Financial Center (see p. 278 for more info).

Bonus Round 2: City Hall Park and the African Burial Ground

A short walk north along Broadway will lead you to City Hall Park (for tours of City Hall, see p. 271). On the far side of City Hall and the Tweed Courthouse, at the intersection of Elk and Reade streets, is the **African Burial Ground National Monument.** Unearthed during construction of the federal office building on the corner, this patch of graveyard was part of a 6.6-acre burial ground that stretched beneath New York's municipal center. Starting in the 1690s, some 15,000 Africans were laid to rest here. Undulating mounds and a granite memorial make somber markers for this occluded layer of New York history.

Itinerary 5 Index

African Burial Ground National Monument Visitor center, 290 Broadway, at Reade St. ✆ 212/637-2019. www.nps.gov/afbg. Visitor center Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; monument daily 9am–5pm.

American Numismatic Society gallery at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York 33 Liberty St., btw. William and Nassau sts. ✆ 212/234-3130. www.numismatics.org. Mon–Fri 10am–4pm.

Castle Clinton In Battery Park. ✆ 212/344-7220. www.nps.gov/cacl. Daily 8:30am–5pm.

Diwan-E-Khaas 53 Nassau St., btw. Maiden Lane and Liberty St. ✆ 212/571-7676. Mon–Fri 11am–8:30pm. Other locations: 26 S. William St., btw. Broad and William sts. ✆ 212/248-2361. 26 Cedar St., btw. William and Pearl sts. ✆ 212/480-0697 (this location closes at 3:30pm).

Federal Hall 26 Wall St., at Nassau St. ✆ 212/825-6888. www.nps.gov/feha. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm.

Fraunces Tavern 54 Pearl St., near Broad St. ✆ 212/425-1778. www.frauncestavernmuseum.org. Admission $4. Mon–Sat noon–5pm.

Jiannetto's ✆ 917/753-0819. Mon–Fri 10am–3pm.

National Museum of the American Indian 1 Bowling Green, btw. State and Whitehall sts. ✆ 212/514-3700. www.americanindian.si.edu. Daily 10am–5pm; Thurs until 8pm.

The New York City Police Museum 100 Old Slip, btw. Water and South sts., 2 blocks south of Wall St. ✆ 212/480-3100. www.nycpolicemuseum.org. Suggested admission $7, not enforced. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm.

180 Maiden Lane Between Front and South sts. ✆ 212/799-5000 for recital information.

St. Paul's Chapel 209 Broadway, at Fulton St. ✆ 212/233-4164. www.saintpaulschapel.org. Exhibit Mon–Sat 10am–5:45pm; Sun 8am–4pm. Churchyard Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, extended to 5:30pm during daylight saving time; Sun 7am–3:30pm. Concerts Mon 1pm. Concert hot line ✆ 212/602-0747.

Trinity Church 74 Trinity Place, at Broadway and Wall St. ✆ 212/602-0800. www.trinitywallstreet.org. Church Mon–Fri 7am–6pm; Sat 8am–4pm; Sun 7am–4pm. Churchyard Mon–Fri 7am–4pm, extended to 5pm during daylight saving time; Sat 8am–3pm; Sun 7am–3pm. Museum Mon–Fri 9am–11:45am, 1–5:30pm; Sat–Sun, holidays 9am–3:45pm. Free guided tours daily 2pm; also Sun following the 11:15am service. Concerts Thurs 1pm. Concert hot line ✆ 212/602-0747.

Veronica's Kitchen Front and Pine sts. ✆ 917/848-2465. Mon–Fri lunch hour (often sold out by 2pm).

Get the skinny on destinations or events at information kiosks like this one, at the corner of Broadway and Park Row. See p. 325 for more information.

NYC BASICS

1 Information Centers

The city runs four information centers, with free maps and brochures as well as discount coupons for tourist-friendly fare.

Federal Hall Information Center (Financial District) 26 Wall St., at Broad St. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm. Subway: 2/3/4/5 to Wall St.

New York City's Official Visitor Information Center 810 Seventh Ave., btw. 52nd and 53rd sts. ✆ **212/484-1222.** www.nycvisit.com. Mon–Fri 8:30am–6pm; Sat–Sun 9am–5pm. Subway: B/D/E to Seventh Ave.; N/R/Q/W to 57th St.; 1 to 50th St.

NYC Heritage Tourism Center Broadway and Park Row. Mon–Fri 9am–6pm; Sat–Sun 10am–5pm. Subway: 2/3 to Park Place; R/W to City Hall; 4/5/6 to Brooklyn Bridge/City Hall; A/C/J/M/Z to Fulton St./Broadway Nassau.

Current Events

The city does a decent job of providing the latest scoop on goings-on around town. The **New York Convention & Visitors Bureau** has a 24-hour information hot line (✆ **800/NYC-VISIT** [692-8474] or 212/397-8222). For updated listings of music, theater, museum, and other events, check online at www.nycvisit.com.

Official Visitor Information Kiosk for Chinatown At the triangle of Canal, Walker, and Baxter sts. Daily 10am–6pm. Subway: J/M/N/Q/R/W/Z/6 to Canal St.

Information at the Libraries New York's public libraries are founts of information, and real live librarians are on hand to answer your brief *factual* questions (this service is of little utility for existential concerns). Bronx, Staten Island, and Manhattan residents can call ✆ **212/340-0849** (Mon–Sat 9am–6pm). In Brooklyn, call ✆ **718/230-2100,** option 5 (Mon and Fri 9am–6pm, Tues–Thurs 9am–9pm, Sat 10am–6pm, and Sun 1pm–6pm). The Queens InfoLine is ✆ **718/990-0728** (Mon–Fri 10am–8:45pm, Sat 10am–4pm).

2 Transportation

BY PLANE

New York City is served by three major airports: **LaGuardia Airport** (✆ **718/533-3400**), **John F. Kennedy (JFK)** International Airport (✆ **718/244-4444**), and **Newark International Airport** (✆ **973/961-6000**) in New Jersey. Newark often has the best cheap flight deals, and during high-traffic hours it can be the most accessible to and from Manhattan. For transportation information for all three airports, call **Air-Ride** (✆ **800/247-7433**). The line is open 24 hours, with live operators Monday through Friday from 8am to 6pm.

Getting to the Airports (Cheaply)

To JFK The new **AirTrain JFK** can be a little cumbersome if you have a ton of luggage, but generally I find it a pretty smooth ride. The AirTrain costs $5 each way and connects terminals with the E/J/Z trains at Sutphin Boulevard/Archer Avenue, the LIRR at Jamaica Station, and

the A train at Howard Beach. For the latter, make sure you catch an A to Far Rockaway, not to Lefferts Boulevard. The train runs 24/7. Allow about an hour for the subway and monorail combined once you've left Manhattan. ✆ **877/JFK-AIRTRAIN** (535-2478). www.panynj.gov.

To LaGuardia The **M60 bus** ($2) serves all LaGuardia terminals, connecting to the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Bus rides from 106th Street average 1 hour, though traffic can cause that time to vary. The **Q33** and **Q48** also make LaGuardia runs. For the complete schedule, call ✆ **718/330-1234** or log on to www.mta.nyc.ny.us/nyct.

To Newark The **AirTrain Newark** (✆ **888/EWR-INFO** [397-4636]) is a smooth ride, but it's a little pricey at $15 one-way. It takes 20 minutes to get from Penn Station in Manhattan to the airport monorail. The cheapest trip is to take the **Path train** from Manhattan to Newark ($1.75). At Newark Penn Station you can catch the **62 bus,** which makes several stops but will get you to the airport for only $1.35. On the downside, it's all but impossible to make that trip in under an hour. ✆ **800/772-2222.** www.njtransit.com.

Carpooling Alternatives God bless the interwebs for bringing people together. Two new online services will help you save money on cabs and black cars via carpool hookups. **Hitchsters** (www.hitchsters.com) specializes in airport rides, to and from Brooklyn and Manhattan. **RideAmigos** (www.rideamigos.com) takes a broader approach, opening its ride board for events and commutes on top of flights. (They also provide an environmental slant, telling you how many pounds of carbon dioxide you'll save by sharing your ride.)

BY BUS

As symbols of cheap interstate travel, Greyhound buses will live on in country songs, but the burgeoning **Chinatown bus** industry has stolen the hearts of Eastern Seaboard adventurers. A round-trip to Washington, D.C., is only $35, and the slightly longer trip to Boston is $30. There are now dozens of companies making runs, with possible destinations stretching to include places like Richmond, Philly, and Albany ($20–$60 round-trip). The difference between any two companies isn't dramatic; I choose based on who's got the most convenient schedule for me on any given trip. You can buy a ticket online, or you can just show up at the departure point and let eager touts jostle each other for your business. The buses are full size, and every driver I've ever had has been a professional.

Fung Wah Bus Service This bus line travels between Boston's South Station Bus Terminal (700 Atlantic Ave.) and New York's Chinatown (139 Canal St., btw. Chrystie St. and the Bowery). A one-way ticket is $15. ✆ **212/925-8889.** www.fungwahbus.com.

New Century Travel, Inc. For the DC to NY and NY to Philly routes, this company runs a full schedule from 88 E. Broadway (at Forsyth St.). The run to DC's Chinatown (513 H St. NW) is $20 one-way and $35 round-trip, and Philly (55 N. 11th St.) is $12 each way, $20 round-trip. ✆ **212/627-2666.** www.2000coach.com.

Washington Deluxe If DC and New York's Chinatowns aren't convenient for you, this bus company makes pickups in assorted NYC locations (Brooklyn, the Lower East Side, and Penn Station), and drops off at 1333 19th St. NW and at 441 New Jersey Ave. NW in DC. $21 for one-way and $40 round trip ($25 each way on Sat). ✆ **866/BUS-NYDC** (287-6932). www.washny.com.

GETTING AROUND TOWN

Underground

The MTA cooked its books to put the screws to subway and bus riders—$2 is now the price of a single ride. Until straphangers are called upon for our next bloodletting, there are a couple of discounts. When you spend $7 or more on a pay-per-ride **MetroCard,** you get a 10% bonus. For 24 hours of heavy commuting you can get a FunPass—all-you-can-ride for $7.50. Unlimited rides are also available in 7-day ($25), 14-day ($47), and 30-day ($81) formats. Children under 44 inches tall ride free. ✆ **718/330-1234.** www.mta.nyc.ny.us.

On Water

Ferries The **Staten Island Ferry** is as safe a mode of travel as you'll find in New York. It's also hard to beat for scenic satisfaction, with great views of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and Governors Island (p. 255). The boat runs 24/7, leaving from the new terminal at Whitehall, on the southeastern tip of Manhattan. On the far side you can enjoy the scattered distractions of St. George, Staten Island, or you can follow the boat-loading sign and circle back across the harbor. Other ferry services and the New York Water Taxi also offer great views, but when you factor in ticket prices, they're not such great deals. ✆ **718/815-BOAT** (2628). www.nywatertaxi.com. Boats leave every 20–30 min. on weekdays, less frequently during off-peak and weekend hours. Subway: R/W to Whitehall St.; 4/5 to Bowling Green; 1 to South Ferry (ride in one of the first 5 cars).

3 NYC's Free & Dirt Cheap Resources

Disability Services The mayor maintains an office (✆ **212/788-2830**) that provides free advice to visitors with disabilities on how to get around the city. A few elevators aside, the subway system is largely inaccessible to those with disabilities, but 95% of the city's buses are equipped to carry wheelchairs.

Emergencies ✆ **911** is, of course, the number for emergency police, fire, and ambulance service. For nonemergencies and just about any city government function you can think of, call ✆ **311.** Other emergency numbers include the **AIDS Hot Line** (✆ 212/807-6655), **Animal Bites** (✆ 212/676-2483), **Poison Control** (✆ 800/222-1222), **Suicide Prevention** (✆ 212/673-3000), **Traveler's Aid** (✆ 718/656-4870), and **Safe Horizon** (formerly Victim Services) (✆ 212/577-7777).

Gay & Lesbian Resources The **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center** (208 W. 13th St., btw. Seventh and Eighth aves.; ✆ **212/620-7310;** www.gaycenter.org) is the meeting place for more than 400 organizations. Most of the online calendar lists events with charges, but there are a few freebies, in addition to the free lending library and archive. Other good places to look include the free weeklies ***HX*** (www.hx.com), ***New York Blade*** (www.nyblade.com), ***Next*** (www.nextmagazine.net), ***Gay City News*** (www.gaycitynews.com), and the ***Village Voice*** (www.villagevoice.com). You can find copies stacked up in bars, clubs, stores, and sidewalk boxes throughout town. If you don't want to risk getting a little ink on your fingertips, the websites are also good sources of information. The **Gay and Lesbian National Hot Line** (✆ **888/THE-GLNH** [843-4564]; www.glnh.org) offers peer counseling and information on upcoming events. Open Monday through Friday 4pm to midnight, Saturday noon to 5pm. Also see p. 157 for the **Gay Men's Health Crisis** Hot Line (✆ **800/AIDS-NYC** [243-7692).

Moving On city streetlamps, "Man with a Van" signs are ubiquitous. This is a good way to go for small moves. For the online version of these streetlamp flyers, **www.citimove.com** is a helpful site. Movers bid against each other so you get decent prices, and movees critique the jobs so you know which companies to avoid.

Post Offices The **Main Post Office,** at Eighth Avenue and 33rd Street (✆ **212/967-8585**), is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone Service Several small companies have come into the New York phone market, saving consumers hundreds of dollars a year versus the rates for AT&T and Verizon. Prices start low, but once the Man slaps on his $20 or so in monthly taxes and surcharges, it may not seem quite so cheap. If you're already paying for broadband, you can get around the gummint by signing up with a company like **Vonage** (www.vonage.com). Monthly rates start low: $14.99 for basic (500 free min. of local and long distance), up to $24.99 for all-you-can-yak. With taxes et al., the two plans are $20.92 and $33.25, respectively. There are start-up fees, and the bugs aren't entirely out of this system yet, but the audio quality is improving. Usually you can keep your existing number, too. The next broadband telecommunications wave is to turn your PC into a phone. **Skype** (www.skype.com) will let you talk free with other Skype users worldwide. You'll need a mic and headphones, but those are cheap enough, and the program downloads quickly. (For calls outside the Skype system, rates start at around 2¢ per minute.) **Yahoo!** is another entrant into this field. Their rates start at nothing (PC to PC via Yahoo! Messenger), and vary widely for PC to phone. Long-distance starts around 1¢ or 2¢ per minute. Sixty cents

The Wi-Fi Wave: Wireless Access Across the City

The city is rapidly going wireless. Our Wi-Fi zones are constantly expanding, already enveloping Bryant Park, Union Square, City Hall Park, the South Street Seaport, and the Columbia campus, among other popular NYC destinations. Central Park and Riverside Park have partial coverage as well. Most hotels have gotten onboard, as have retailers like McDonald's and Starbucks (free for the first 2 hr.). Check **www.nycwireless.net** for the latest sites.

Many public libraries are Wi-Fi friendly, in addition to providing free Internet. Check online for more information, or your nearest branch (www.nypl.org in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island; otherwise www.queenslibrary.org or www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org). Many cafes and fast food establishments also offer Internet access for cheap. The **ING Café** on 45 E. 49th St. (✆ **866/692-2233**) offers free Internet (and cheap and tasty coffee) on weekdays from 7am to 6pm.

No-Pay Restrooms Open to the Public

For comprehensive information, you can take advantage of the efforts of people with way too much time on their hands by logging on to **www.thebathroomdiaries.com** and browsing the lists of public facilities.

Many city parks have comfort stations, though they're usually not the cleanest. **Bryant Park** is an exception, with neat facilities in the northeast corner of the park along 42nd, between Fifth and Sixth avenues.

Transit hubs are good bets. The downstairs **Dining Concourse at Grand Central** recently added a second set of facilities on the west end. Until everyone else figures it out, they're not nearly as crowded. **Penn Station** has public restrooms on the Main Concourse near the ticket windows. **Port Authority** is not nearly as scary as it used to be, and there are restrooms all over the terminal. The main restrooms, on the Main Concourse of the South Wing and on the second floor between the North Wing and the South Wing, are clean enough and heavily trafficked by commuters.

Bookstores with cafes are almost always equipped with public restrooms. **Barnes & Noble** and **Borders** are good examples, with locations across the city. Other merchants worth noting are department stores and retailers like **Old Navy, Kmart,** and **Bed Bath & Beyond.** Large, heavily trafficked tourist hotels are also great options. Times Square is a particularly unfriendly area for restrooms, but the **New York Marriott Marquis** (1535 Broadway, at 46th St.) has nice facilities in its eighth-floor lobby.

per minute will let you catch up with your college buddies in Antarctica. Check www.voice.yahoo.com for the latest offer. If you're only interested in long-distance savings by traditional means, compare rates online at **www.lowermybills.com**. (The site also offers rate comparisons on everything from cellphones to insurance to mortgages.) Also, if you're still paying for directory assistance for businesses, stop. Google now has a completely free service (✆ **800/GOOG411** [466-4411]). There's also a text-message offshoot (send to ✆ **GOOGL** [46645]) if you want results sent straight to your cellphone.

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NYC EVENTS CALENDAR

SUNDAY

- Harlem Meer Performance Festival, 4pm
- SummerGarden at the MoMA, 8pm
- Habana Outpost
- Frick Collection (Sun 11am–1pm)
- Museum of the City of New York (Sun 10am–noon)
- New York Hall of Science (Sun 10–11am, Sept–June)

MONDAY

- Martin Luther King Jr. Concert Series, 7:30pm
- HBO Bryant Park Summer

TUESDAY

- Naumburg Orchestral Concerts, 7:30pm
- Stars of Tomorrow at Pier 45, 6:30pm
- Washington Square Music Festival, 8pm
- World Financial Center, 7pm
- China Institute (Tues 6–8pm)

WEDNESDAY

- Madison Square Park, 7pm
- Rockefeller Park, 7pm
- Outdoor Cinema Program at Socrates Sculpture Park
- Summer on the Hudson: Movies Under the Stars
- RiverFlicks for Grown-Ups at Pier 54
- Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (Wed 4–8pm)

THURSDAY

- BAM Rhythm & Blues Festival at MetroTech, noon
- Castle Clinton, 7pm
- Crotona Park Jams, 6pm
- Music in the Square (Union Square), 5:30pm
- RiverRocks at Pier 54, 7pm
- Seaside Summer Concert Series, Coney Island, 7pm
- Summer Nights at El Museo del Barrio, 6:30pm
- Children's Museum of the Arts (Thurs 4–6pm)
- China Institute (Thurs 6–8pm)
- New Museum (Thurs 7–10pm)

FRIDAY

- Seaport Music Festival, 7pm
- Sunset on the Hudson at Pier 45, 7pm
- Brooklyn Bridge Movies With a View
- Bronx Museum of the Arts (Fri noon–8pm)
- Guggenheim Museum (Fri 6–8pm)
- International Center of Photography (Fri 5–8pm)
- Japan Society (Fri 6–9pm)
- The Morgan Library & Museum (Fri 7–9pm)
- Museum of Modern Art/ MoMA (Fri 4–8pm)
- New York Hall of Science (Fri 2–5pm, Sept–June)
- The Noguchi Museum (First Fri 10am–5pm)
- The Rubin Museum of Art (Fri 7–10pm)
- South Street Seaport Museum (Third Fri 5–8:45pm)
- Whitney Museum of American Art (Fri 6–9pm)

SATURDAY

- East River Park Amphitheater, 1pm
- Governors Island, 1pm
- Riverside Clay Tennis Association, 7pm
- RiverFlicks for Kids at Pier 46
- Brooklyn Museum of Art (First Sat 5pm–11pm)
- The Jewish Museum (Sat 11am–5:45pm)
- The Studio Museum in Harlem (First Sat 10am–6pm)

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